DEVELOPING CULTURALLY COMPETENT STAFF TO BETTER ENGAGE STUDENTS OF COLOR

by

Casey L. Schurman

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Abstract

This dissertation explores student disengagement as a pressing issue in the United States' educational system that may contribute to lower levels of academic achievement and higher school dropout rates. Student engagement, feelings of belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support of students of color were explored through literature and found to be disparate among student groups in one school's fifth grade. Possible interventions to address these disparities were discussed. Professional development to address teachers' cultural competence and responsiveness and introduce student-centered teaching practices (platforms for student voice and implementation of inquiry-based instruction) was proposed as an intervention with a small group of elementary school teachers. This intervention was developed to change the attitudes and beliefs of participants and provide strategies and opportunities to promote student engagement, feelings of belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support with their students. The effectiveness of the professional learning was analyzed and found that this intervention was successful in meeting these targets.

Keywords: engagement, belongingness, perceptions, cultural responsiveness, professional development

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Eric Rice, Dr. Yolanda Abel, Dr. Camille Bryant

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Earl and Char Schurman, who love me unconditionally and always empower me to follow my dreams.

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Chapter One: Review of Literature

The United States has aimed its sights at eliminating educational disparities between races since the first implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, and since then, equity in education has become a civil rights issue (McMurrey, 2014). However, through more than 50 years of re-authorization and changes to educational reform, educational disparities remain (McMurrey, 2014). There are disparities for students of color in almost all data measures captured in K-12 schools, including gaps in achievement, opportunity, discipline, and high school graduation (Emdin, 2015; Gibson, 2005; Lakin, 2016; Martinez, McMahon, & Treger, 2016; Suhyun, Malchow, & Jingyo, 2014). In all of these areas, research has shown student engagement, or disengagement, as a factor for academic success or failure (Alivernini & Lucidi, 2011; Archambault, Janosz, Fallu, & Pagani, 2009; Fall & Roberts, 2012; Greene, Miller, Crowson, Duke & Akey, 2004). Research has also shown that students of color, especially male students of color, are engaged at lower rates than their White peers (Emdin, 2015; Gibson, 2005; Olivier, Morin, Langlois, Tardif-Grenier, Archambault, 2020). Therefore, there is a need for the educational system to focus on student engagement and recognize it as a contributing factor to adverse outcomes for male students of color to work to engage all students to ensure equity within districts and at the school level (Emdin, 2015).

Student Engagement Defined

Engagement can have a variety of definitions. However, in the academic world, student engagement is typically defined as one (or more) of three dimensions of engagement: behavioral, affective, and cognitive (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006; Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Jimerson, Campos, & Greif, 2003; Wang & Eccles, 2012).

Behavioral engagement relates to a student's behavior, positive and negative, and their participation. For example, a student might show behavioral engagement if they adhere to the school rules and are not disruptive in class (Olivier et al., 2020; Wang & Eccles, 2012). Furthermore, a student frequently raising their hand to participate in class discussions or a student who participates in afterschool clubs or activities shows behavioral engagement (Wang & Eccles, 2012).

Affective engagement refers to a student's feelings and attitudes (Archambault et al., 2009). Affectively engaged students enjoy and are interested in school. They also demonstrate a strong sense of self and belongingness within the classroom community (Wang & Eccles, 2012). If a student is frequently talking about their dislike of school, this display of negative feelings towards school and lack of interest in school demonstrates affective disengagement (Archambault et al., 2009; Wang & Eccles, 2012).

Finally, cognitive engagement has to do with a student's achievement and learning. Newmann, Wehlage, and Lamborn (1992) situate engagement unidimensionally in cognitive engagement. Their definition is built from a constructivist approach, framing engagement as students' building on their current knowledge and then using it to connect to events and activities outside of school (Newmann et al., 1992). Within this definition of engagement, students are engaged in school because they know their learning can be applied to their future endeavors (i.e., future employment). In other words, they are engaged in school because they see the long-term payoff of their education (Margolis & McCabe, 2004; Yazzie-Mintz, 2010).

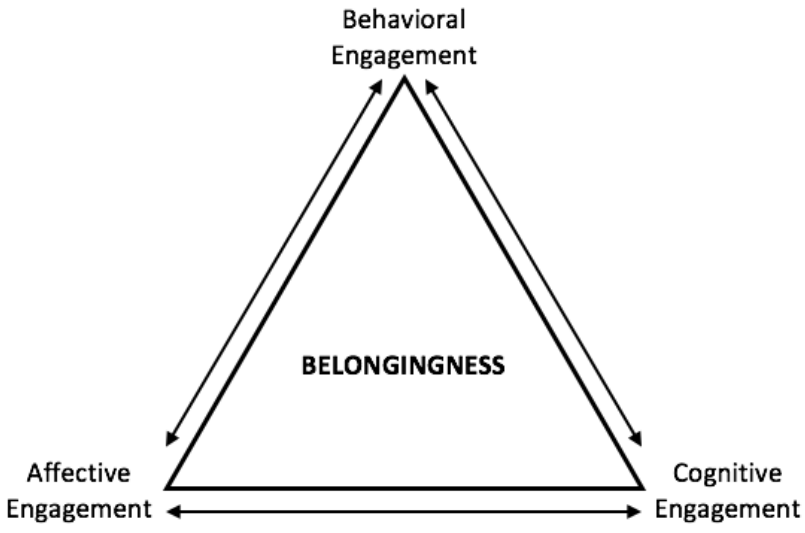
Finn and Voelkl's (1993) definition of engagement differs from Newmann and colleagues' (1992) in that they situate their definition bidimensionally within the behavioral and affective dimensions. They describe engagement as the active participation or participatory

behaviors observed within the classroom (Finn & Voelkl, 1993). At the most basic level, this engagement comes solely from participating in classroom discussion (Finn & Voelkl, 1993). Then, as the student begins to internalize the basic levels of engagement and become more involved, they identify more with their school and their peers and develop a sense of community or belongingness, an idea to be explored later in this chapter (Finn & Voelkl, 1993).

While all of these definitions apply to academic engagement, I conceptualize engagement as intertwined between the three dimensions and argue that these three dimensions of engagement are equally critical in explaining a student's whole school experience (see Figure 1). I define engagement as an individual's active involvement and/or connection to an activity in which they find purpose and relevance. However, it is also essential to consider the impact of a student's belongingness on each of these three dimensions.

Figure 1

Interconnectedness of the Dimensions in Explaining Engagement



Note. This figure shows the relationship between the dimensions of engagement as conceptualized in this dissertation.

Belongingness

A student's feelings of belongingness can be directly linked to their behavioral, affective, and cognitive engagement (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Olivier et al., 2020). Students who demonstrate high levels of engagement also describe strong feelings of belongingness (Booker, 2007; Harris, 2006; Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe, & Carlson, 2000). Conversely, students who describe a lack of belongingness display lower levels of engagement (Booker, 2007; Harris, 2006; Jimerson et al., 2000). This complex relationship between engagement and belongingness can cause an engaged student to become disengaged if they lack the appropriate feelings of belongingness, just as building up a student's feelings of belongingness can help the student to be more engaged in their academic endeavors (Booker, 2007; Harris, 2006; Jimerson et al., 2000).

Sometimes belongingness is used interchangeably with the terms connectedness and relatedness, but while they are similar, there are distinct differences in their definitions. Connectedness is defined as "an academic environment in which students believe that adults in the school care about their learning and them as individuals" (Blum, 2005). Connectedness relates specifically to the school climate and how the student-teacher relationship is cultivated (Blum, 2005). Relatedness is similar but is specific to the relationship, not the culture, and how closely knit that relationship is (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Osterman, 2000). However, the definition of belongingness encompasses more than connectedness and relatedness and is described as a specific type of engagement that includes a student's "sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (e.g., teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class" (Goodenow, 1993, p. 25).

Many researchers in this field have argued that school should be a caring community, one in which students feel as though they belong through the relationships they form with their teachers and their classmates (Furman, 1998; Hargreaves, Earl, & Ryan, 1996). Both Vygotsky and Dewey have described the educational experience as a social process, one in which learning occurs through relationships and collaboration (Dewey, 1958; Osterman, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). According to Dewey (1958), education "is realized in the degree in which individuals form a group" (p. 65). This community, or belongingness, cannot be achieved until each student feels trust and safety as a group member (Furman, 1998).

However, developing a student's feelings of belongingness cannot happen overnight. Instead, student needs for belongingness must be met on an ongoing basis, requiring an investment of time (Osterman, 2000; Ryan 1995). Therefore, schools and teachers play a significant and vital role in creating a school environment where students feel like they belong and believe their needs can be met (Osterman, 2000). Students begin to develop perceptions about their teachers and their school early in their academic careers (Hardiman, 2012). These perceptions of teachers are constructed by what students experience and believe, inside and outside of school, and do not necessarily reflect reality (Fosnot, 2005). Student metacognition allows for real and illusory understanding based on these experiences and beliefs (Flavell, 1979). How students perceive their teachers and their teachers' willingness to support them is directly related to students' feelings of belongingness and their level of engagement in the academic setting (Spilt, Hughes, Wu, & Kwok, 2012; Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997). When students do not feel belonging within their school community or develop negative perceptions of their school or teachers, they lack engagement and could face a myriad of consequences resulting from their disengagement. These consequences include lower rates of participation, changes in behavior,

and lower rates of academic performance, and they can even result in more lasting effects like school dropout and even suicide (Archambault et al., 2009; Booker, 2007; Harris, 2006; Jimerson et al., 2000; Ramey, Busseri, Khanna, Hamilton & Rose-Krasnor, 2010). Students who are disengaged are less willing and less likely to participate in the classroom (i.e., activities and discussions) and are less likely to participate in the greater school community (i.e., after school activities and clubs) (Fall & Roberts, 2012; Finn & Voelkl, 1993). Disengaged students often put forth less effort on assignments and sometimes do not complete given assignments (Newmann et al., 1992).

In addition to less participation and less work completion, students with low levels of engagement are more likely to get into trouble and more likely to be suspended from school (Martinez et al., 2016). This is a spiraling effect because while behavior has been a consequence of disengagement, it has also contributed to disengagement (Bowditch, 1993; Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Xitao, 2011; Suhyun et al., 2014). This means that while disengaged students are more likely to demonstrate undesirable behaviors, the consequences of these behaviors push students into further disengagement.

Disengaged students also struggle academically, and this disengagement can cause low academic achievement (Achambault et al., 2009; Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, & Hall, 2003; Fall & Roberts, 2012; Green et al., 2004). However, when students feel as though they belong, they can thrive in their setting and show higher academic performance rates (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1995). Furrer and Skinner (2003) found that students with high levels of belongingness and strong relationships with their teachers had higher grades and self-efficacy. In the same study, students who lacked these feelings were more often bored and frustrated during school activities (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). When students become bored and frustrated at school,

they often do not possess the cognitive engagement factors that help them see the importance of their education (Newmann et al., 1992). While there are other factors (i.e., poverty) that could also lead to disillusionment, students who are unable to see the purpose or the payoff of education are even less likely to be engaged and more likely to be susceptible to pull-out factors like employment, which could lead to issues in attendance and high school completion (Bjerk, 2012).

When students lack belief in the importance of school and begin to miss school days, it can lead to further disengagement and even school dropout (Bjerk, 2012). In a Baltimore Education Research Consortium (2011) study, chronic absenteeism (missing 20 or more days of school in one academic year) of sixth graders was an early warning sign of school dropout. Other warning signs of dropout include failing math and/or English, being older than the average age for the grade, and having experienced previous retention or a suspension of three or more days (Baltimore Education Research Consortium, 2011). A study by Mac Iver and Mac Iver (2010) also identified these same predictors of school dropout in ninth-grade students in the same district. They found that 40% of first-time ninth-grade students were absent more than 20 days during their freshman year and approximately 40% failed more than one core content class (Mac Iver & Mac Iver, 2010).

Engaging Students of Color

Disengagement, a lack of belongingness, and the consequences of these explained above are seen disproportionately among students of color (Emdin, 2015; Gibson, 2005). Throughout this dissertation, the term students of color will describe Black, African American, and Hispanic students unless otherwise noted. As the research in this and the following chapters shows, these

were the student groups chosen due to disparate data for these student groups compared to White students.

A plethora of research examines these factors, all related to a student's level of engagement, and compares them among student groups. When looking at these consequences of student disengagement—low academic performance, increased risk of dropout, high rates of punitive discipline—they all show disparities between White students and students of color. While many of the potential causes of disengagement in students of color will be discussed later in this chapter, several effects of disengagement are pervasive across the board.

One example, the opportunity gap, has been a topic of discussion among school personnel for decades. The opportunity gap is described as the disparity of educational and academic outcomes between students of color and their White peers, resulting from systemic failures to provide equitable opportunities to all students (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Milner, 2012).

There have been many educational reforms to address this issue (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011). Rowley and Wright (2011) found significant disparities in standardized test scores between White and Black students. According to their findings, when analyzing the scores of the same assessment, Black students only scored 82.8% of the average score of White students (Rowley & Wright, 2011). The U.S. Department of Education (2005) shared data that showed that by the end of eighth grade, only 12% of Black students and 15% of Hispanic students were considered proficient in reading compared to 39% of White students, and 9% of Black students and 13% of Hispanic students were proficient in math compared to 39% of White students. While this achievement gap can certainly not be explained away solely by the disengagement of

students of color, engagement is likely part of the explanation of this gap (Archambault et al., 2009; Booker, 2007; Harris, 2006; Jimerson et al., 2000).

Dropping out of high school, an effect directly correlated to a student's engagement, is another disparity found between White students and students of color. In 2018, the status dropout rate for students between the ages of 16 and 21 in the United States was 5.3% (U.S. Department of Education, Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Status dropout is defined as the number of students, in this case between 16 and 21 years old, who are not in school and who do not have a high school diploma, certificate, or GED (Robledo Montecel, 2014). Male dropouts are more prevalent than female dropouts, and there are disparities between races (U.S. Department of Education, Center for Education Statistics, 2020). In 2018, the status dropout rate for males between the ages of 16 and 21 was 6.4% for Black males and 8% for Hispanic males compared to 4.2% for White males of the same age (U.S. Department of Education, Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Again, while many factors may play a role in students dropping out of high school, disengagement and a lack of belongingness have been found to be some of the causes (Bjerk, 2012).

Finally, a third disproportionality linked to student engagement is student behavior and discipline. In the United States, Black students are three and a half times more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than their White counterparts (Suhyun et al., 2014). Skiba and Peterson (2000) reported that while Black students only represented approximately 17% of the total school population, they represented a disproportionate number of suspensions (32%) and expulsions (30%). As with the achievement gap and dropout, this cannot be solely attributed to a student's disengagement. However, an understanding of the consequences of disengagement

justifies a further exploration of issues of student engagement, and ultimately a need to address them in schools.

Theoretical Framework

With the consequences of disengagement being significant to a student's academic journey and future, it is important to look at the theoretical frameworks that might help to explain student disengagement. The following frameworks help make sense of potential factors affecting student engagement and causes of disengagement.

Ecological Systems Theory

In the ecological systems theory, Bronfenbrenner (1977) posits that human development occurs as a result of the changing environment. His work centered on the belief that research on human development was too narrow and that research needed to look deeper among multiple levels of human interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner (1977) breaks down the interaction of a human within their environment into four nested systems and one other system that penetrates all systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Each system includes interactions that an individual will have and the impact that those interactions will have on an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The following is a description of these five systems.

Microsystem and mesosystem. These systems are the closest interactions to the student and carry the most impact and influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The microsystem describes the direct interactions that an individual will have (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) with the people who are the closest to the individual and with whom the individual interacts regularly. For a student, these might include interactions with their parents, friends, and teachers. The mesosystem describes the interactions between an individual's microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). In the

case of a student, this includes the relationships and interactions between their school, their family, and their friends. While student engagement and belongingness can be impacted at all levels, this is the level in which the student is interacting with the school, the teachers and staff, and their classmates (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Exosystem. Taking one step away from the student as the center, this system describes the things or people whose actions impact an individual, but that are not in direct contact with the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). For a student, these could include school or district policies, a district's Board of Education, community members, and neighbors.

Macrosystem. Working out from the student as the center, the macrosystem is the system furthest from the student. This system is the broader culture in which an individual lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). For a student, this might include laws, socioeconomic status, and education. This macrosystem could have a more significant impact for a student of color living within a white supremacist society.

Chronosystem. The chronosystem is the system that is not nested in the others, but rather that which can penetrate and impact the relationships between all other systems. This system represents social and historical events and periods of time that impact an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Critical Race Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory does well at presenting a broad spectrum in which human development is impacted but tends to be more general than other theoretical frameworks. Critical race theory (CRT), which describes systematic inequalities, focuses more specifically on the macro and chronosystem levels that impact students of color today. CRT presents the idea that racism and inequalities are ingrained in every aspect of

American life (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This is apparent in academic achievement gaps, the school-to-prison pipeline, and higher arrest and incarceration rates for Black individuals (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Students are aware of these issues and understand that these inequalities are their realities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lopez, 2003). These systematic inequities are perpetuated at school by system staff that lacks understanding of student backgrounds and cultures and have been unable to create safe and equitable learning environments (Gibson, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This sometimes perpetuates the feeling among students of color that they are outsiders, like school was not created for them and makes them believe they do not belong in the school community (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tyson, 2011).

Oppositional Culture Theory

With oppositional culture theory (OCT), Fordham and Ogbu propose an opposition by Black students to what they perceive as "White" culture. According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), this phenomenon occurs due to students perceiving a broader rejection of themselves and their culture in schools, and, in response, students of color reject their academic success because they have categorized it as "White" and not for them. They cannot see the pay-off and value of education due to what is perceived (correctly, according to CRT) as limited education and job prospects and, as a result, do not feel as though school is a place for them. When students do not feel as though they belong in a school community, they may also try to overcompensate by trying to either "act Black" or "act White" to find a way to fit in with a social group (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Fordham and Ogbu (1986) explored disparities in the academic achievement of Black students, arguing that some Black students' worries that they might be labeled as "acting White" prevented them from putting forth the effort that they were capable of and that they

might cover up their abilities to increase their feelings of belongingness within their race and culture (although Fordham and Ogbu did discuss how some Black students were able to mediate this internal conflict) (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). With this thinking, students cannot see their efforts pay off and can develop negative feelings and attitudes about school.

Harris (2011) challenged Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) claims. Her findings suggest that students accept their race even when it does not align with the dominant culture. She found that students remained proud of their race and culture, even when they lacked feelings of belongingness at school (Harris, 2011). Tyson (2011) also challenged Fordham and Ogbu, arguing that White students are typically given more opportunity for academic success compared to the opportunities afforded to Black students. So, the perception of inequality is not just Black students' perception but also their reality (Tyson, 2011). She also argued that this disparity in opportunity could lead to a student's negative feelings towards school (based on their real or illusory lack of value and belongingness), rather than it stemming from Ogbu's (1991) theory of opposition (Tyson, 2011). While OCT does appear to be something that some students of color may struggle with, both Harris and Tyson make valid points about the reality within society that students of color face, rather than just what they perceive (Harris, 2011; Tyson, 2011). Therefore, while OCT relates specifically to students' perceptions, Harris and Tyson point out that these inequities are part of the everyday reality of students of color.

These frameworks all give insight into why different factors may be impacting students and their engagement in school. They give insight into the structures within education that may negatively impact students of color internally and externally. The rest of this literature review will focus on both the internal and external (or systematic) factors and how these theoretical frameworks inform the systemic structures that can impact students and their engagement.

Barriers to Student Engagement

Multiple factors influence students' level of engagement, with some contributing to engagement and others to disengagement. Of the factors that may lead to disengagement, some are barriers that are school-related, and some come from factors beyond the school's control (Bjerk, 2012). The following factors fall within the ecological systems theory's three innermost circles.

How and What Students Are Taught

The fact that researchers have coined the terms "opportunity gap" and "engagement gap" to describe educational disparities between White students and students of color demonstrates that we, as a nation, are not serving our students of color well (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011; Rowley & Wright, 2011). Curriculum, instruction, and assessment make up our educational framework and determine what and how we teach our students and how we measure the extent to which students have learned what we have taught. Unfortunately, this framework often plays to the strengths of students from the dominant culture, lacking the inclusion and support that students of color deserve (Emdin, 2015; McCarthy, 1990).

Curriculum. Traditional curricula are rarely designed for or inclusive of students of color, sometimes making it difficult for students of color to become engaged (Emdin, 2015). Traditional curricula in K-12 schooling were designed around a Eurocentric mindset, focusing more on the strengths and experiences of the participants who are members of the dominant, or White, culture (McCarthy, 1990). This can be explained by Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) CRT, the idea that racism and inequality have infected what we are teaching our children. Students of color cannot see themselves within this Eurocentric curriculum and, sometimes, are portrayed in a way that conflicts with their sense of identity (Bachman, 1994). As a result, these

students may lack feelings of belongingness, value, and fairness within the school community (Emdin, 2015; Furman, 1998; Hargreaves et al., 1996).

Unfortunately, even some of the best attempts at building a multicultural curriculum have failed (Bachman, 1994; Emdin, 2015). Schools and school officials often lack the understanding and/or foundations necessary to be responsive to students from various backgrounds and provide lessons and resources that can be "characteristically disabling" due to their lack of relevance or cultural accuracy (Tatum, 2006, p. 45). This can reinforce a students' opposition to White culture, which dominates their education and causes them to disengage from their learning, making students of color, or non-White students, feel that school is not a place for them (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Gibson, 2005).

Instruction. Being in a more academically challenging, more rigorous classroom with appropriate supports helps engage students of color in their learning and build confidence (Caraway et al., 2003; Green et al., 2004). Students not placed appropriately in these classes often get bored in standardized classes and become disengaged in their schoolwork (Green et al., 2004). Students of color are underrepresented in advanced, or gifted and talented (GT), classes and overrepresented in standard classes (Lakin, 2016). Students are typically accepted into more rigorous classes, like GT, after a systematic screening process that often includes teacher nominations (Lakin, 2016). These screening processes are often biased against students of color and do not always take students' talents into account (Lakin, 2016; Siegle & Powell, 2004). As a result, fewer students of color are enrolled in these classes, making it seem almost impossible for students of color to excel, and the feeling of belongingness difficult for the few students of color who are enrolled. Gibson (2005) shared the experience of a Mexican student who was placed in advanced classes and was the only student of color in the class. Instead of remaining in the class,

she said, "I felt like I didn't belong there. I just changed to a class where I felt safer" (Gibson, 2005, p. 591). While this plays into the ideas within critical race theory and ideas of racial identity, it also exemplifies the importance of developing more diverse classroom settings where students from various cultures can feel accepted.

In addition, students in Standard or remedial classes are often not provided the same opportunities as those in honors, GT, or higher-ability classes (Lakin, 2016). Oakes (1985) described that lower-ability classes focus more on conformity, structure, and rule-following, whereas higher-ability classes focus more on self-regulation, problem-solving, and independence. Teachers make instructional decisions that vary based on the perceived abilities of their students. Students in high-ability classes frequently are provided rich tasks, hands-on activities, and opportunities to collaborate with their peers, leading to an engaging classroom environment (Burgess, 1983; Hallam & Ireson, 2005; Oakes, 1985). On the other hand, students in low-ability classes often move at a slower pace of instruction, experience lots of repetition, and complete more worksheet-based independent work, whether they have demonstrated a need for that type of instruction or not (Burgess, 1983; Hallam & Ireson, 2005; Oakes, 1985). Due to tracking and current practices for talent spotting, students, especially students of color, in these lower-ability classes often remain there for their academic careers, even when they have the capabilities of moving to more advanced classes (Lakin, 2016; Siegle & Powell, 2004). This poor instruction often leads to student disengagement and a feeling that their teachers do not care (Hallam & Ireson, 2005).

Assessment. Many students of color become discouraged and do not see the potential in themselves to be able to graduate due to increased demands of testing, thus giving up or disengaging from school until they can drop out per the allowances of state law (Kennelly &

Monrad, 2007; McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010; Seastrom, Hoffman, Chapman, & Stillwell, 2005). States are responsible for setting requirements for high school graduation. Over recent years, these requirements have become more demanding as states have faced pressure for students to be college and career-ready and prepared to compete in the global workforce (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010). Nationally, only 72.6% of ninth-grade students meet the requirements to promote to tenth grade, and in districts with higher rates of students of color, the proportion is often lower (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010).

Policies and Practices of Discipline

As Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) described in CRT, students of color often experience invisible barriers on a systematic, or exosystem, level that contributes to lower levels of student engagement. These inequities include unfair policies that make it difficult for students to achieve academic success. While these imbalances and injustices are sometimes not seen, the public school system is plagued with inequalities and inequities that disproportionately affect students of color and impact their engagement (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Policies. While said to be designed for the safety and learning of students, many school policies make students of color feel as though their culture does not belong in the school, leading to frustration of students and higher rates of disengagement (Heidelburg, Rutherford, & Parks, 2021; Morris, 2005; Noguera, 2008). Many schools enforce a dress code policy, often including policies on hairstyles, which aims to minimize loose-fitting pants or shirts and does not allow specific braided hair designs common among people of color (Morris, 2005; Noguera, 2008). Some believe that this dress style gives a threatening or "gang-like" impression, and it should not be acceptable school wear (Morris, 2005). Schools ignore that these styles of dress are often normative in the community in which students live and that by taking away the ability for

students to dress in a way that they feel comfortable, they are inadvertently opposing the students' cultures and pushing them away from school (Morris, 2015). While some students conform to these dress codes, others see them as a way to oppress students of color and intentionally resist these policies (Morris, 2005). Unfortunately, this resistance often leads to disciplinary actions (sometimes including suspension) for students not abiding by the school rules, only adding to the disengagement of these students (Morris, 2005; Noguera; 2008).

Another unfair policy is the "Zero Tolerance Policy" (Morris, 2005; Noguera, 2008; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; 2000). This policy was initially used in the mid-1980s to combat drugs in the United States. Individuals found to have even the smallest amount of illegal substances often faced significant jail time (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). This policy caught on in schools in the late 1980s and was initially applied to discipline students for bringing weapons or drugs to school, or to discipline students for gang-related activity, as a way to keep schools safe and drug-free (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). However, this policy quickly took another turn, leading to swift and harsh consequences for things like dress code violations, not adhering to the hat ban at school, or being "disruptive" (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). As will be described in more detail in the following section, these swift and harsh discipline practices occur more frequently among students of color and literally push them out of school (Martinez et al., 2016; Suhyun et al., 2014).

Practices. These types of policies, resulting in unfair consequences like suspensions and expulsions, not only lead to time outside of the classroom but also to students feeling rejected and pushed out of school, leading to low levels of belongingness and engagement (Bowditch, 1993; Fine, 1991; Heidelburg et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2011). These consequences are often

disproportionately given to students of color, and this disproportionality is known as *the punishment gap* (Gregory et al., 2016; Morris & Perry, 2016).

As previously stated, Black students are three and a half times more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than their White counterparts (Suhyun et al., 2014). Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox (2015) found that each suspension a student receives increases their likelihood of dropout by 20%. Suspensions do not improve subsequent behavior but deteriorate students' relationships with peers and school staff (Morris & Perry, 2016).

These disproportionate and exclusionary practices have created a direct path known as the "School-to-Prison-Pipeline," for students to enter the criminal justice system (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Noguera, 2008). "Consistent with the way we approach crime in society, the assumption is that safety and order can be achieved by removing 'bad' individuals and keeping them away from others who are presumed to be 'good' and law abiding" (Noguera, 2003, p. 343). Beginning in the 1990s, many schools added a School Resource Officer, a fully trained and armed police officer, to their full-time staff to maintain safety within schools (Morris & Perry, 2016). However, the School Resource Officer role has become enforcement, not safety, bringing the criminal justice system into schools (Hirschfield, 2008; Kupchick & Monahan, 2006; Welch & Payne, 2010). Police officers have been called to classrooms to remove students who have refused to follow teacher directions (Coon & Travis, 2012). As depicted on the news recently, there have been several instances where School Resource Officers have handcuffed young children and had been physically violent with other students (Schladebeck, 2017, May 16; Yan, 2017, January 4). These behaviors, often initiated by the school, are unfair in that they disproportionately impact students of color (Coon & Travis, 2012). Students can see these

inequities in discipline practices and lose trust in the system, the school, and their teachers, causing them to disengage from school altogether (Bowditch, 1993; Lee et al., 2011).

Relationships

Student relationships at school and their feelings of importance are vital to a student's engagement (Caraway et al., 2003; Carter, 2007; Gristy, 2012; Suhyun et al., 2014). The relationships that students form at school are also an integral part of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory. Two of these major groups are their peers, or classmates, and their teachers.

Peer relationships. The peers around them particularly influence high school students, and these peer relationships can help engage or disengage students in their schooling based on their feelings of belongingness within their peer group (Suhyun et al., 2014). As students develop throughout their K-12 education, these peer and social interactions become even more critical (Anderman, Maehr, & Martin, 1994; Gristy, 2012). Gristy found that social elements are one of the driving factors for student attendance and feelings of importance in high school. Students can develop wide networks of friends throughout their schooling, allowing them to develop social capital (Gristy, 2012). Students with high social capital have a resource to tap into when they have a problem or need support (Gristy, 2012). Students with lots of friends are popular, which results in advantage and power over other students (Gristy, 2012). However, this power and popularity can also serve as a gatekeeper or way to exclude individuals or groups of students (Allan, 1999; Gristy, 2012; Gunter & Thomson, 2007). Students who lack popularity do not share its protections and are often the targets of bullying (Gristy, 2012; Qualter, 2003). Not being a member of the popular group can cause students to feel unwelcome, or as if they do not belong

at school (Gunter & Thomson, 2007). This lack of belongingness can influence a student's engagement and emotional well-being (Gristy, 2012; Qualter, 2003).

In addition to managing the challenges of peer interactions in school, many students of color, especially those attending predominately White schools, do not feel as though they fit in with the White culture of the school (Gibson, 2005). As a result, students often cluster together and form same-race groups as a form of support (Carter, 2007). Other peers, especially White peers, see this as a form of racial isolationism and often perceive this separation negatively (Carter, 2007). Those fitting in with the dominant culture, or those seen as being popular, can use this opportunity to isolate further and exclude students of color (Carter, 2007; Gristy, 2012). This separation can create dissonance in a school, with an us versus them mentality, among Black and White student groups, and can break down feelings of belongingness within the school culture (Carter, 2007).

Teacher relationships. Teachers also play a role in including or excluding students and student groups (Gristy, 2012). When a teacher can encourage high levels of affective engagement from all their students (and not just those already actively engaged), their students will display more confidence in the classroom and are more likely to have high rates of academic achievement in comparison with students with low levels of confidence (Caraway et al., 2003). Students who are afraid to fail and take educational risks are less likely to be engaged in their work and do not show the same levels of academic success (Caraway et al., 2003).

Early in their academic careers, students develop perceptions about the amount of support their teachers will provide to them and the amount of risk they can take in the classroom, and these perceptions impact a student's engagement in school (Spilt et al., 2012; Vallerand et al., 1997). When teachers take the time to build solid relationships with their students, get to know

their students on a personal level, and take an interest in their students, both inside and outside of the classroom, students achieve at higher rates than with teachers who do not build solid relationships with their students (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014; Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009; Spilt, et al., 2012). By making the content meaningful to students and frequently allowing a creative outlet, teachers can get to know students and their interests (Emdin, 2015). Students who can connect with the content and find meaning show higher levels of cognitive engagement (Howard & Terry, 2011). This same level of engagement also applies when students understand the importance of their work and see where it fits into their achievement and future endeavors (Green et al., 2004).

Positive student-teacher relationships are also important in disciplinary practices. Black males are more likely to receive an office referral for classroom misbehavior than any other student group (Martinez et al., 2016) and are often not given a second chance or a chance to explain their side of the story (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014). In studies examining school discipline and student-teacher relationships, students reported that they had more positive perceptions of teachers whom they believed gave them the benefit of the doubt (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014). According to students, this means that teachers took the time to talk to students about an issue, rather than just dispensing a disciplinary consequence (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014). In these cases, students felt like the teacher cared more about them, even if a consequence was still given, and felt a greater sense of value and belongingness within the classroom (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014).

As such, student voice is an important way for teachers to show students that they care and for students to take their place as contributing and belonging members of the classroom. Some teachers allow students to openly and honestly share their opinions (or side of the story), make decisions about instruction, and even choose their own method(s) of demonstrating their

understanding. However, teachers have traditionally held power in education and made all of the decisions within the walls of their classrooms, not allowing students to share their voices (Mitra, 2004). Many teachers worry that giving voice and choice to students could threaten their power and authority in the classroom (Mitra, 2004). Inversely, when teachers did not allow students to have input into the decisions impacting their education, students developed feelings of alienation and powerlessness, contributing to disengagement from school (Fullan, 2001; Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; Mitra, 2004; Pope, 2001).

Chhuon and Wallace (2014) explored student perceptions of their teachers by surveying high school students from across the country. They found that students preferred to have teachers who did more than "just teach" (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014). Students defined teachers who just teach as teachers who did not have the students' interest in mind and who did not recognize and give students extra attention or support when it was needed (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014). Other bodies of work that specifically examine the realities and perceptions of students of color also support this idea (Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005; Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009). Hughes et al. (2005) found that students of color often receive less support from their teachers than do their non-student of color peers, even when the need for support may in fact be higher. This lack of support diverts trust in the student-teacher relationship and can leave students of color feeling unsupported (Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009).

Conclusion

Engagement is a multi-faceted issue, with multiple dimensions, that contributes to a student's ability to be an active participant in their academic career (Appleton et al., 2006; Fredericks et al., 2004; Jimerson et al., 2003). Engagement is intertwined with many of the aforementioned factors of academic success and is crucial in the academic success of students of

color (Emdin, 2015; Gibson, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ogbu, 2004). We, as a nation, have created a system that has resulted in decisions that do not demonstrate a commitment to equity, access, and excellence in all students' educations (McMurrey, 2014). This pattern of poor decision-making has infiltrated administrations, schools, and staff in the United Stated (Jackson, Wood, & Zboja, 2013; McMurrey, 2014).

Due to both the complexities involved and the importance of engagement to a student's success, it is essential to continue to explore the issue of engagement, its prevalence in classrooms, and its impact on student success. Chapter two focuses on the prevalence of engagement in classrooms, examining student feelings of belongingness and real and perceived levels of teacher support in an elementary school, as school-based factors that might be amenable to an intervention to lower disparities in students' active involvement and connection to school and classroom.

Chapter Two: Needs Assessment Study

As discussed in chapter one, a lack of student engagement can have serious consequences for students (Emdin, 2015; Gibson, 2005; Lakin, 2016; Martinez et al., 2016; Suhyun et al., 2014). Student feelings of belongingness and perceptions of teachers play a significant role in their levels of engagement. In this chapter, I have evaluated the level of student belongingness, as defined in chapter one, and perceptions of teacher support among students of color, especially in males, to determine student engagement.

Context of the Study

Much of the literature around student engagement has identified risk factors and consequences of disengagement of older students, typically in middle or high school, with very few studies measuring the consequences of student disengagement in younger students (Archambault et al., 2009). The purpose of this needs assessment study was to do just that: understand the levels of engagement in one elementary school so that the students at this school can be better supported and engaged. In this mixed-methods study, data was collected and analyzed to determine what, if any, disparities existed regarding engagement, belongingness, and perceived teacher support between White students and students of color (Black and Hispanic). I hoped to answer the following question:

1. Are there disparities in (a) engagement, (b) belongingness, and/or (c) student perceptions of teacher support for students of color in 5th grade?

I worked in the school used for this study, an elementary school in the mid-Atlantic region. The school is located in a suburban neighborhood and serves 757 students in pre-kindergarten through grade five. It is a Title I school, nestled within an affluent school district, with approximately 43% of students receiving free and reduced lunch. It was chosen because of

its diverse school population, which, while not representative of the district itself, is an important issue for an affluent district (which includes Title I schools) to address, especially given accountability pressures and equity concerns. This school is a majority-minority school, comprised of approximately 38% Black, 30% White, 20% Hispanic, and 12% Asian students. Approximately 12% of students qualify for English as a Second Language (ESL) services and 11% qualify for Special Education services.

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was used to answer the research question. This approach was used to understand and corroborate student engagement as measured by qualitative and quantitative measures. In using a combination of these approaches, there is a greater likelihood of triangulation and opportunity for confirmation of results (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). For this needs assessment study, the quantitative data helps paint a picture of student engagement, whereas the qualitative data gives a voice to the student participants' feelings and experiences.

Participants

The participants in this study were fifth-grade students at the school. Fifth grade was chosen for a variety of reasons. First, students in intermediate grades (third, fourth, and fifth) receive letter grades on their report cards, allowing report cards and student grades to be used as a data measure. Second, after a conversation with the school administration, it was decided that students in fifth grade would be able to complete the Research Assessment Package for Schools (RAPS) survey, one of the measures used in this study, independently and without teacher support. If teacher support was required for students to complete the survey, the survey results

could be skewed due to students feeling pressured to inflate ratings for the teacher they were working with, making the results invalid (Cohen et al., 2018).

The fifth grade was 44% male and 56% female and had a similar racial makeup to the whole school body (see Table 1). Consent forms were sent home to all 96 fifth-grade students at this school. Only 21 consent forms were completed and returned. While this was a small participant group (only 22% of the fifth grade), it was somewhat representative of the gender makeup of both the school and grade (see Table 1). However, it is worth noting that the sample's racial makeup is different from the school's overall makeup, which could impact results because desired representation was not achieved, and there could be unobservable and unmeasured factors in play.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants Compared to the Entire School

Race	5th Grade Participants						Entire School Population
	Male		Female		Total		
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage
White	5	24%	5	24%	10	48%	30%
Black	0	0%	6	28%	6	28%	38%
Hispanic	2	10%	2	10%	4	20%	20%
Asian	1	4%	0	0%	1	4%	12%

Note. This table shows the number and make-up of participants in the study, by race and gender, compared to the make-up of the entire school population.

All the students in this study had been at the school since third grade, which was interesting given the 18% mobility rate at this school. It is also important to note that no Black males participated in this study since this study aimed to determine whether there were disparities in engagement in Black males compared to their White counterparts. This could be due to various factors, including disengagement of this student group and/or students and their families not being willing to participate in or trusting the intentions of this study. However, in an attempt to gather more representative data, permission was granted by the principal to collect observational data and be granted access to school-wide disciplinary data.

Construct Definitions and Measures

As previously stated, the purpose of this needs assessment study was to determine if there were disparities in engagement, belongingness, and student perceptions of teachers between students of color and White students. For this needs assessment study, engagement was defined as an individual's active involvement and/or connection to an activity (Reeve et al., 2004; Russell, Ainley, & Frydenberg, 2005). Belongingness, sometimes referred to as connectedness or relatedness, was defined as a student's "sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (e.g., teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class" (Goodenow, 1993, p. 25). Student perceptions of teachers, the third variable measured in this needs assessment study, refered to what students had experienced and believed about the willingness to care and amount of support their teachers were willing to give (Flavell, 1979; Fosnot, 2005).

Measures yielding qualitative and quantitative data were used to inform the three variables explored in the research question. These measures, organized by variable, can be found in Appendix A.

Research Assessment Package for Schools. Fredricks et al. (2011) put together a comprehensive list of 21 assessments used to measure student engagement. After evaluating the appropriateness of these assessments for use with fifth-grade students, the Research Assessment Package for Schools-Elementary School Student Report (RAPS) was chosen for this study. This instrument was chosen because it was designed to measure both behavioral and emotional engagement and was developmentally appropriate for use with fifth-grade students due to the wording and vocabulary used in the statements, as well as the use of Likert scales in the answers (Institute for Research and Reform in Education, Inc., 1998).

The RAPS is a commonly used assessment for determining student engagement in school and includes reliability and validity measures (Fredricks et al., 2011). The Institute for Research and Reform in Education, Inc. (1998) developed this survey and used it with more than 2,000 predominately Black students in grades three through five in six urban schools within a district. In determining the assessment tool's reliability, they found an inter-item correlation of .59 and an alpha reliability of .81 (Institute for Research and Reform in Education, Inc., 1998). Validity was measured using the student engagement scores and associating them with measures provided by the school (attendance and academic data). There were strong correlations between how students scored on the RAPS questionnaire with what was expected from the measures provided by the school (Institute for Research and Reform in Education, Inc., 1998).

The RAPS student survey (questionnaire) helped to gain perspective into students' feelings and engagement. The complete RAPS has a teacher, parent, and student survey, but only the student scales were used in this study. The RAPS student scale is 88 statements long, covering statements in the Engagement, Beliefs About Self, and Experiences of Interpersonal Support domains. The Engagement domain is comprised of the Ongoing Engagement and

Reaction to Challenge subdomains, the Beliefs About Self domain is comprised of the Perceived Competence, Perceived Autonomy, and Perceived Relatedness subdomains, and the Experiences of Interpersonal Support domain is comprised of the Experiences of Support from Parents and Experiences of Support from Teachers subdomains. The statements are broken down by subdomain in the RAPS assessment manual, making it easy to tease out statements related to the constructs examined in this needs assessment study. The assessment manual gives guidance for scoring these subdomains separately, suggesting that the measure remains reliable and valid when looking at the subdomains independent of a holistic score (when all domains are included in the assessment).

Therefore, to measure constructs germane to this study, only statements from the Ongoing Engagement, Perceived Relatedness, and Experience of Support from Teachers subdomains were used. The description of the items being assessed in the Perceived Relatedness subdomain aligned with the definition of belongingness described in chapter one. However, statements related to Parent Emotional Security were removed because they did not relate to what was studied. This resulted in 31 test items covering the three factors explored: engagement, student feelings of belongingness, and student perceptions of teacher support. A list of the statements, categorized by the variable being measured, can be found in Appendix B.

As outlined in Appendix B, there are six statements on the modified RAPS student questionnaire that target student engagement, 14 statements that target student belongingness, and 11 statements that target perceived teacher support. These statements relate to a student's effort and attentiveness at school. Students indicated how true they believed each statement to be. The scale for this assessment included the choices of "Very True," "Sort of True," "Not Very True," and "Not at All True."

Report cards. Report cards provided measures of student perceptions of teacher support. The school system in which this data was collected uses quarterly report cards to report student effort and achievement related to a student's performance. Since this study was completed in the Spring, three academic quarters worth of data were included on the students' fifth-grade report cards (students had not yet been graded for the fourth quarter). There were nine letter grades per quarter for the five core subjects (language arts, math, science, social studies, and health) and four grades per quarter for the four related arts (physical education, music, art, and library media). The letter grades ranged from A to E. Each of the core subject areas and related arts classes also gave students an effort code based on how much effort the teacher believed the student put forth each quarter. These codes ranged from 1 to 3. A description of the letter grades and effort codes can be found in Appendix C.

As discussed in chapter one, the amount of teacher support students receive is directly related to student achievement (Spilt et al., 2012; Vallerand et al., 1997). Additionally, students are more willing to take risks and put forth greater effort when they believe their teachers support them (Spilt et al., 2012; Vallerand et al., 1997). Therefore, it was expected that students whom their teachers supported would achieve higher grades on their report cards and be shown to put forth more effort.

Classroom map. This measure was used to inform the variables of belongingness and student perceptions of teacher support. When I went into the classroom for observations, I created a rough sketch of the classroom layout and student desks. This map was used to track teacher movement and interactions throughout a lesson.

Students have increased feelings of belongingness and teacher support when their teachers develop positive relationships with their students (Gristy, 2012). Teachers can use

proximity to affirm and strengthen these relationships, monitor student needs, and provide support (Conroy, Sutherland, Snyder, & Marsh, 2008; Gunter, Shores, Jack, Rasmussen, & Flowers, 1995; Lampi, Fenty, & Beaunae, 2005). Therefore, it was expected that if a teacher was not making contact or was not in close proximity to a student, that student might feel excluded or not supported by the teacher.

Student participation chart. A student participation chart was used as a measure of student engagement. This measure included a tally chart that included headings for each race represented by male students in the class (White, Black/African American, and Hispanic). There was a row in which the number of male students of each race was recorded and a row for the number of times male students of that race raised their hands or participated in the class discussion/activity. I also created a box at the bottom of the chart to record the number of total opportunities for students to participate/respond to a teacher's question.

Students who participate more in class are showing behavioral engagement (Wang & Eccles, 2012). Therefore, it was expected that students who participated more in class were more engaged than those who did not actively participate (raise their hand) during class.

On/off task data sheet. This data sheet was used to measure student engagement and is often used during classroom observations for Special Education testing to compare the on-task behaviors or engagement of two students in a class (the student being tested and another peer in the class). Since I observed three students (one Black/African American, one White, and one Hispanic), I added an additional column to collect the data of a third student. Therefore, the chart was comprised of four total columns. One column had time intervals of two minutes, and the other three columns were for student names and blank spaces to make checkmarks for observed on-task behaviors.

As described with the student participation chart, students who participate more and are focused on instruction in class show behavioral engagement (Wang & Eccles, 2012). Therefore, it was expected that students who were on-task (focused on instruction) more frequently were more engaged than those who were not on-task or focused during class.

Focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to collect any qualitative data for any variables that could better inform the research question. The plan was for the focus group to only include male students of color. However, since no Black male students returned their consent forms, this was only done with the male Hispanic students who returned their consent forms. Students were asked what they liked about school, what they liked about their teachers, what they liked about their classmates, and what they would change if they could change something about school. Students also had the opportunity to share anything else they wanted to share during our time together.

Disciplinary data. Initially, this measure was not included in the research plan. However, since there were no Black male participants in the needs assessment study (RAPS questionnaire, Report Cards, or Focus Group), I wanted to find a measure that included this population to further inform the variable of belongingness. The school collects this data and, because the disaggregated data is confidential, I was limited to the data provided by the school. Due to the school's platform to record this data, the data was already in chart form, broken down by student race, with corresponding percentages of office referrals.

As discussed in chapter one, student disciplinary practices that remove students from the classroom, such as office referrals where students are sent to an administrator's office, lead to student feelings of rejection and greatly impact a student's feelings of belongingness (Bowditch, 1993; Fine, 1991; Lee et al., 2011). It was also discussed that disproportionalities are often seen

in discipline data, with higher rates of discipline and referral for students of color (Gregory et al., 2016; Morris & Perry, 2016). If there were disparities in this school's discipline data, it was anticipated that students belonging to those disparate groups might lack belongingness.

Procedures

The following procedures were followed to collect and analyze data. They align with the measures that were previously described.

Data collection. To move forward with the data collection in this mixed-methods study, I first needed to get approval from the school (where I worked as a teacher). I asked for approval to speak with students and send home the consent forms that would allow me to complete the RAPS questionnaire, access their fifth-grade report cards, and have students participate in a focus group. During a fifth-grade lunch period, I explained the needs assessment study and consent form to all fifth-grade students. I gave each fifth-grade student a letter of consent form to take home and discuss with their families. Students gave completed consent forms to the grade level paraeducator, who then gave them to me.

I also asked for permission to observe in a classroom of 24 students over a week, with the teacher's consent. After approval, I began data collection using the identified measures.

Research Assessment Package for Schools (RAPS). I made copies of the modified RAPS questionnaire and coded the surveys based on the race of the student participants so that, while keeping the individual responses anonymous, I could sort the responses by race (1-White, 2-Black, 3-Hispanic, and 4-Asian). After two weeks, I gathered the 21 students who returned their signed consent form, and during the first hour of the school day, gave the modified version of the RAPS questionnaire. I gave each student a paper copy of the modified RAPS questionnaire (with their designated code) and a pencil. Each statement was read aloud to

students using a predetermined protocol (see Appendix D), and students selected their responses on the paper questionnaire. Following the completion of the questionnaire, students returned to class and kept the pencil they were given.

Report cards. After receiving the signed consent forms, I provided a list of the 21 student participants to the teacher secretary at the school. They printed the fifth-grade report card (including quarters one through three) for each student participant and provided the student participants' demographic data (race and gender). This data was entered into a spreadsheet for analysis. The headings of the spreadsheet included student name, gender, race, and a column for each letter (A, B, C, D, E) and effort grade (1, 2, 3). The number of each grade was counted, and the number of those grades was entered into the database.

Classroom map. I asked the fifth-grade teacher with the most student participants if I could observe their classroom. This teacher had 24 students, and not all of the participants who had returned their consent forms (for the RAPS and Report Card data) were included in this classroom. The teacher gave times when core subjects (reading and math) were taught and a class roster that included student names, gender, and race. I conducted three 60-minute observations within one week in the same core subject and collected data on teacher interactions, student participation, and on/off-task behavior, respectively. I used the classroom map to track teacher interactions during my first observation. Before my observation, I visited the classroom and made a rough sketch of the classroom layout. When I got to the classroom for my observation, I took attendance of students present and marked on the map the gender and race for each student desk. I observed the teacher and marked their movement throughout the lesson. When the teacher called on or had direct interaction with a student (e.g., spoke to the student,

gave them praise, directed a question), it was marked with a star on the student's desk on the map.

Student participation chart. Student participation data was collected during the second observation. The chart was completed before the observation by adding a heading for each of the races of male students in the class. On the day of the observation, I took attendance and recorded the number of male students of each race. During the 60-minute observation, I used a tally mark to record the race of the male student each time they raised their hand. I also recorded tally marks at the bottom of the paper to indicate the number of opportunities all students had to answer a question directed by the teacher.

On/off task data sheet. On/Off Task data was collected during the third classroom observation. A pre-created chart used by Special Education was used as the data collection tool. For the on/off task observation, I chose three students in the class (one White male, one Hispanic male, and one Black male) and compared their rates of on/off-task behavior. Choosing comparison students at random is a standard behavior observation method used at this school to compare behavioral data between students but may not be generalizable to anyone other than these three students. Using a timer on my phone, I looked up every two minutes throughout the 60-minute observation, recorded whether each student was on or off task, and recorded any relevant notes. If the student was on task (e.g., looking at the speaker, following a teacher direction, completing an assignment), I put a check under their name for the time period and if they were off-task (e.g., talking, playing with something, not following a direction, not actively working) I left the space blank. Relevant notes might include what the child was doing that was off-task or other classroom observations (e.g., student went to the bathroom, noise in the hallway).

Focus group. I conducted the focus group last. There were no Black male participants, so only one focus group of Hispanic males was conducted. The two Hispanic male students were invited to the office of the Hispanic Liaison, a familiar staff member, to have lunch. Students answered questions about their feelings of belongingness and their perceptions of support from teachers (see focus group protocol in Appendix E). While both students spoke English and Spanish fluently, the Hispanic Liaison translated questions into Spanish, and students were encouraged to answer in the language of their choice. Both students answered the questions in English. The session was audio-recorded and later transcribed into English. Since the participants were young and had limited reading proficiency, their comments were stated back to them to gain clarity and accuracy of their statements. Although member checking in the traditional sense (allowing them to read the report once it has been written) would have added to the trustworthiness of their comments during the focus group, I decided against including it due to the age and reading proficiency of the students.

Disciplinary data. Additional permission to access disciplinary data (i.e., office referrals) for the entire school and the entire school year was sought, and the school's principal granted permission to use this data. A request was made through the teacher secretary at the school, and data was printed from the school system's discipline database. This data did not include the number of office referrals, only the percentage of office referrals broken down by race.

Data analysis. Once data was collected, each measure was analyzed as described below. A mixed-methods approach, that looked holistically at data for each variable, was completed to see if there were disparities in engagement, belongingness, and/or student perceptions of teacher support for students of color compared to their White peers. The findings section, later in this paper, discusses the holistic findings.

Engagement. The student participation chart, on/off task data sheet, and RAPS questionnaire responses related to engagement were analyzed to determine racial disparities around student engagement.

The observation of student participation allowed me to see which students in the class participated and determine any disparities in participation that might indicate disengagement. The participation data from the second observation was analyzed to examine how frequently students raised their hands. To determine the participation rate of each student group, I divided the number of participation attempts by the number of participation opportunities.

The On/Off-task checklist helped determine whether a student was on/off task more frequently than other peers in the class, which might indicate a student's level of engagement. I determined the amount of on-task behavior of male students of color compared to White males. Observation data from the third observation, observing on/off-task behaviors, was tabulated by calculating the time each observed student was on and off-task during the observed period. I divided the number of checks (on-task times) for each student by 30 (the number of 2-minute intervals in the 60-minute observation) and determined the rate or percentage of on-task behavior in the observation window. I then compared the rate of on-task behavior of the three students (White, Black, and Hispanic).

There were six statements on the RAPS questionnaire related to student engagement. Student survey responses were entered into a database that included the student's race (based on the code on the paper) and response to each question. Responses were calculated by the positive or negative direction of the expected response and assigned a value (four for a positive, or favorable, response down to a score of one for a negative, or unfavorable, response). The

statements were then sorted by the variable of engagement and the scores for each variable were averaged overall for each racial group.

I conducted a focus group and intended for this qualitative data to support or reject the data collected as part of the RAPS questionnaire. However, the size of the group was too small (two participants) to draw generalizable conclusions. Therefore, this data was not coded or compared to another student group's data.

Belongingness. The classroom map, disciplinary data, and the RAPS questionnaire statements related to belongingness were analyzed to determine belongingness.

The observation of teacher contact/interaction helped determine disparities in teacher interaction that might influence a students' feelings of belongingness. For example, if a teacher made frequent contact (compared to the amount of contact made with other students), the student might feel as though the teacher cares and feel as if they belong, or are a valued member, of the class. Using this chart (with the star system) enabled me to easily see the race of a student who had little or no contact/interaction, compared to the teacher's interaction with other peers. Students who had lots of stars had more frequent contact/interaction with the teacher, and students without a star had no contact/interaction with the teacher during that observed period.

There were 14 statements on the RAPS questionnaire related to belongingness. This data for belongingness was analyzed using the same process used to analyze data from the RAPS questionnaire with the statements about engagement. After responses were entered into a database, they were calculated by the positive or negative direction of the expected response and assigned a value (four for a positive, or favorable, response down to a score of one for a negative, or unfavorable, response), and the scores for each variable were averaged overall for each racial group.

The disciplinary data was used to potentially explain a cause or consequence of disengagement if disparities between races were found. This data was already analyzed and created into a chart by the program the school uses to store disciplinary data. This chart included the race of the student receiving the office referral and the percentage of office referrals by race. While the data showed that students of color had received more office referrals than White students, I wanted to compare the percentage of office referrals of each student group to the school's population, by race, to determine if a racial disparity was present. To do this, I created a pie chart to show the breakdown of the school population by race and a pie chart of office referrals by race.

Student perceptions of teacher support. The classroom map, report card data, and responses to the RAPS questionnaire statements about perceived teacher support were analyzed to determine perceived teacher support.

Just as with belongingness, teacher contact/interaction observation helped determine the amount of contact/interactions teachers had with students. However, with perceived teacher support, if a teacher made frequent contact with a student, they might have felt as though their teacher supported them. Whereas a student who did not have an interaction/contact with the teacher might have perceived less support from their teacher. Using this chart, I easily saw the amount of contact the teacher made with students in the class and compared this to the contact/interaction that the teacher had with other students in the class.

Both letter and effort grades were analyzed from the report card. They were recorded to determine whether there were patterns or trends among the data for students of color. These trends might include a higher frequency of a letter or effort grade for one racial group when compared to the frequency of that letter or effort grade of another group. If these trends in the

data showed disparities for students of color, this information could explain a student's engagement (potentially the amount of effort they were putting forth) and/or their perceptions of teacher support. Other research has used student grades to measure student engagement and achievement (Aliverini & Lucidi, 2011; Archambault et al., 2009).

A database was created that included student names, gender, race, grade letter data (number of As, Bs, Cs, Ds, and Es), and effort data (number of 1s, 2s, and 3s). When calculating report card data, letter and effort grades were considered separately. A description of grade values can be found in Appendix C. When I looked at effort grades, students could have a total of 15 effort scores in their primary academic areas (five per quarter). I disaggregated the data by race and gender and calculated the average number of each grade per student group. This was done by adding up the effort score (1, 2, or 3) and calculating the average. Academic grades on students' report cards were also examined. I calculated the prevalence of each grade (out of a possible 27 grades) for each racial group. This was divided by the number of members in the group to determine the average of each grade.

The RAPS questionnaire was also used. There were 11 statements related to perceived teacher support. Data analysis occurred using the same data analysis technique (sorting responses by race and calculating the average response) to determine engagement and belongingness.

Researcher's Role

As previously mentioned, I was a staff member at this school. While I did not work directly with fifth-grade students, I was well known in the building and might have previously worked with some students. The methodology for collecting data, as described above, required me to serve multiple researcher roles as I observed students and collected data. Students were aware of the research conducted, and students and their parents had given consent. When I

conducted the focus group and proctored the RAPS questionnaire, my role was an insider. The students knew me both as a staff member and a researcher, and I knew most of the students I was working with (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). However, my role changed to an observer-participant when collecting data within the classroom (on/off-task behavior, teacher contact, and participation). For this type of data collection, I sat in the back of the room, and students were unaware of why I was there. The teacher was aware that I was collecting data but did not know exactly what data I was collecting. This was important because it allowed me to collect accurate data, not data that could have been skewed by either the teacher or the students knowing the behaviors I intended to observe (Cohen et al., 2018).

Findings

The data showed disparities for students of color in fifth grade in terms of their engagement, belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support.

Engagement

I analyzed the student participation data, the on/off-task data, and the RAPS questionnaire's statements explicitly related to engagement and found several disparities. During the second classroom observation, I measured engagement by looking at the participation of male students of color compared to White male students in the same class. None of the three Hispanic male students raised their hands during the 60-minute observation. This compared to one White student who raised his hand on three of the ten opportunities and the other who raised his hand on nine of the ten opportunities. Of the two African American students, one student raised their hand regularly (on five of ten opportunities, being called on twice), while the other student raised his hand on only one of the ten opportunities and was not called on. The fact that no Hispanic males and only one of the two African American males participated in the

discussion showed a disparity in the behavioral engagement of students of color in the class when compared to their White peers. Black and Hispanic male students appeared less engaged in the lessons and participated less frequently than White students in the same class.

The on/off task observation data collected during the third classroom observation produced results parallel to the second observation. The White male student was on-task 78% of the time, the African American male student was on-task 61% of the time, and the Hispanic male student was on task 50% of the time. While this data was based on a small sample of the class, it showed disparities in student participation and attention, both forms of behavioral engagement.

These disparities were also apparent in the results of the RAPS questionnaire. In analyzing the questions relating to student engagement, White and Asian students indicated higher levels of agreement than their Black and Hispanic peers, with positive scores of 3.6, 3.74, 2.78, and 2.48, respectively (see Table 2). The mean scores between students of color (Hispanic, Black, and Asian) were statistically different from White students (p=.012) indicating that race had an effect on student engagement.

Table 2

Average Survey Response for Measured Variables Disaggregated by Race

	Engagement	Belongingness	Perceived Teacher Support
White	3.60	3.45	3.28
Hispanic	2.48	2.05	3.27
Black	2.78	2.56	3.16
Asian	3.74	3.36	3.58

Note. Table 2 shows the average of combined results (combined scores for all participants in each racial group for each variable, divided by the number of statements for the variable and then by number of participants in each racial group), by variable and race, of the RAPS questionnaire.

Belongingness

The measures that addressed student belongingness included classroom observations, the RAPS questionnaire data, and disciplinary data. From the first observation, which tracked teacher interactions, I found that Black and Hispanic male students received less attention than White students in the same class. During this observation, I noted that while the teacher did interact with the majority of the students (calling on, asking questions of, or complimenting them), three of the 16 students did not have any interaction with or acknowledgment from the teacher. Of these students, two were Hispanic males and one was an African American male. While the students receiving less interaction from the teacher were not asked as if they felt as though they belonged in the class, students who are not recognized within a classroom

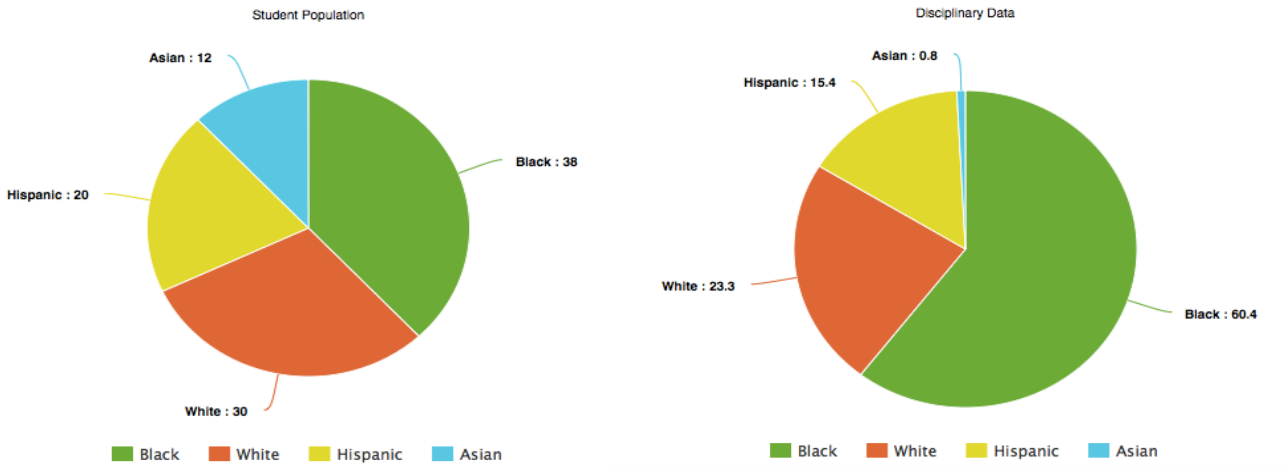
community and do not interact with others (in this case, the teacher) in the classroom community have been shown to lack belongingness (Osterman, 2000).

White students indicated higher levels of agreement with statements on the RAPS questionnaire responses relating to belongingness than any other student group (see Table 2). It is worth noting that most Hispanic students answered negatively (not very true or not at all true) to the belongingness statements. This is the most significant disparity between a group of students of color and their White peers. The mean scores between students of color (Hispanic, Black, and Asian) were statistically different from White students (p=.025) indicating that race had an effect on student belonging.

Disciplinary data showed an overrepresentation of Black students receiving office referrals. This was seen on the two pie charts displayed in Figure 2. The chart on the left depicts the total school population disaggregated by race, whereas the chart on the right depicts the percentage of office referrals disaggregated by race. White, Asian, and Hispanic students are all underrepresented in receiving office referrals. However, Black students are greatly overrepresented in disciplinary data. Where only 38% of the school population is Black, 60.4% of office referrals were for Black students.

Figure 2

Student Population and Disciplinary Data Comparison Disaggregated by Race



Note. The chart on the left shows the population of students in the school, by race, whereas the chart on the right shows the disciplinary data, by race.

Student Perceptions of Teacher Support

Some data shed light on students' perceptions of teacher support. As previously shared, the teacher made less contact/interaction with male students of color than their White peers. Students of color were more frequently marked as showing less effort in core subjects as shown from report card data. Table 3 shows, on average, how many (out of 15) of each effort grade each student and gender group received through quarter three on their report cards. On average, White males received 12.6 (of 15) possible scores showing outstanding effort, while Hispanic males received only 8.5 (of 15) possible scores showing outstanding effort.

Table 3

Average Effort Grade Disaggregated by Race and Gender

		1 Outstanding	2 Satisfactory	3 Needs Improvement
White	Male	12.6	2.4	0
	Female	13.8	1.2	0
Hispanic	Male	8.5	5.5	1
	Female	6.5	8.5	0
Black	Female	10.8	4.2	0
Asian	Male	7	2	1

Academic letter grades (see Table 4) showed a similar pattern in that Hispanic and Black students earned lower grades than White students. Students were given 27 letter grades over the three quarters (nine letter grades each quarter). On average, almost 20 of those 27 grades were As. That was disproportionate to all other student groups, who, on average, earned far fewer As.

Table 4

Average Number of Each Letter Grade (of 27 Possible Letter Grades)

	A	B	C	D	E	Total Grades
White	19.70	6.60	.70	0	0	27
Hispanic	10.75	6.75	8.25	1	.25	27
Black	17.83	8.50	.67	0	0	27
Asian	11	11	3	2	0	27

Additionally, only four White students (40% of the student group) received Cs (for a total of seven Cs), whereas six Black and Hispanic students (60% of the students of color group) received Cs or below (for a total of 40 Cs, six Ds, and 1 E). While these grades, in and of themselves, did not point directly to negative perceptions of teacher support, students tend to attribute the grades they receive to the amount of support they believe they receive from their teachers (McClure et al., 2010; Poorthuis et al., 2014).

For statements related to perceived teacher support on the RAPS questionnaire, all student groups answered positively. This was the highest-scoring area for both Hispanic and Black student groups. However, both the Hispanic and Black student groups still responded less positively about their perceptions of teacher support than did the White student group. The mean scores for perceived teacher support, when comparing White students and students of color (Hispanic, Black, and Asian), were not found to be statistically different (p=.091).

While information was gleaned from the focus group, the trustworthiness of this information might be questionable due to the size of the group, the limited number of focus groups conducted, and the variation of member checking due to the age of the participants. The focus group responses of the Hispanic students provided support for their responses to the RAPS questionnaire. The Hispanic students in the focus group reported that they were happy at school and had positive perceptions and relationships with their teachers.

Discussion

While these findings did not speak to causation, they demonstrated disparities in student feelings of engagement, belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support. Student disengagement might cause lower grades and higher rates of discipline for students of color. This data also aligned with research that showed that Black male students were punished at higher

rates than their White peers and that this disparity caused feelings of isolation or a lack of belongingness at school (Bowditch, 1993; Fine, 1991; Lee et al., 2011). In looking at all of these findings, students of color (both Black and Hispanic) displayed a disparity in engagement and belongingness compared to their White peers.

It is worth noting that a limitation of the study was that no Black males were included in the RAPS questionnaire, the review of Report Card data, or the focus group since there were not any Black male participants. This, in and of itself, might demonstrate a lack of engagement among Black males. I tried to mediate this limitation and used observational and disciplinary data, both of which included Black males and showed disparate data. Another limitation was the small sample of students (only a small percentage of the fifth grade).

As a staff member and researcher-practitioner in this study, I had a unique perspective on student engagement, belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support in the school. My initial observations of what I perceived as inequities guided the direction of this specific research study. In thinking about potential root causes of the disparities uncovered in this study, it is important to note that the backgrounds and experiences of school staff do not match those of the students (something that will be explored in later chapters). Staff need to be aware of and responsive to these differences and understand how their actions may contribute to and perpetuate the disparities that have been uncovered (Emdin, 2016). I am not sure that teachers were aware of this data or common disparities found in classrooms. To address these disparities, teachers must be made aware so they can work to remedy them in the classroom (Emdin, 2016).

The school district offered optional professional development where staff could build awareness, but this was offered during the school day, which required teachers to use sub days, write sub plans, and gain approval from school administrators. There were a limited number of

sessions open to all schools and staff in the district, so they often filled up quickly. Staff also had to be interested in attending this professional development and understand the benefit of making instructional changes that would impact their students and help remedy these disparities.

Conclusion

It was made clear that as a school we need to better engage each student, especially students of color, and increase feelings of belongingness and perceptions of teacher support. Moving forward, with the variables of engagement, belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support having been identified by the literature as imperative for students' success, it is necessary to look to remedy these disparities and better engage male students of color. The next chapter will explore possible interventions to increase the engagement of students of color.

Chapter Three: Intervention Literature Review

Chapter two demonstrated a need to support and engage students of color in my school. The needs assessment study and accompanying research demonstrated that students of color reported lower levels of engagement, lower feelings of belongingness, and lower perceptions of teacher support than their White counterparts. Students of color also often received lower grades and did not receive marks for effort on par with their non-student of color peers. Male students of color did not participate in class as often, nor did they have the same interaction rate with their teachers as their White male counterparts. Furthermore, Black students were overrepresented in disciplinary referrals, making up more than 60% of the year's office referrals even though Black students only represented 38% of the school population. While these results certainly had limitations due to the small sample size, they aligned with reviewed and recent literature, which also found racial disparities in achievement and engagement data (Archambault et al., 2009; Brown-Griffin, Metzger, Halliday-Boykins, & Salazar, 2020; Caraway et al., 2003; Fall & Roberts, 2012; Green et al., 2004; Kuhfeld, Condron, & Downey, 2021). It is clear from the data in chapter two that changes need to be made to better support and engage students of color in their educational journeys.

Research Based Interventions

Many issues plague school systems — ranging from the physical condition of the school building(s) to procuring school supplies — often taking much of the time and efforts of school personnel (Simons, Hwang, Fitzgerald, Kielb, & Lin, 2010). However, the school's central purpose is the education of students (Meyer & Rowan, 2014). Moreover, while those other issues are important, they should be secondary to the needs of students. As a country, we need to prioritize students and make decisions that better engage and support them. We need to ensure

that school is a safe and enjoyable place for all students, where all students feel as though they belong and are valued and necessary members of the school community (Reeve et al., 2004; Russell et al., 2005).

Schools have realized that they need to make the school experience more student-centered and that disengagement of their students of color is a problem. Researchers have evaluated interventions to see if they are working to better engage students of color and make them feel like they belong (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012). This research has focused on evaluating the impact of multiple interventions, from smaller class sizes to gender-segregated classes, yielding conflicting results as to whether these interventions are effective at increasing student engagement among students of color (Bosworth, 2014; Krassel & Heinesen, 2014; Singh, Vaught, & Mitchell, 1998; Stotsky & Denny, 2012). However, for this literature review, I will explore more commonplace interventions that focus on increasing student feelings of belongingness, including extracurricular programs, additional and reflective staffing, and changing staff attitudes and beliefs about their students, because these are things that I, in my capacity as a staff member in this district, could either implement and/or advocate for.

Extracurricular Programs

Schools across the country have developed and expanded extracurricular and after-school programs to increase student engagement (Grossman, Lind, Hayes, McMaken, & Gersick, 2009). Extracurricular activities provide students with greater social competence (perhaps through forming relationships) and the opportunity to develop feelings of belonging in the program (Anderson-Butcher & Conroy, 2002; Burt, Resnick, & Novick, 1998; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1999). Extracurricular activities include academic and tutoring

programs, mentoring clubs, and career-related learning experiences (Hamovitch, 1999; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2009).

Durlak and Weissberg (2007) reviewed studies of more than 50 extracurricular programs looking for factors that increased program impact. They found that extracurricular programs focused on skill development and those that provided sequential, active, focused, and explicit activities were the most effective at achieving their outcomes (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). They also found that programs with these features led to students reporting significant improvements to their feelings and attitudes, whether feelings and attitudes were intended outcomes of the program or not (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). By their definition, feelings and attitudes include a student's perceptions of self (self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy, and racial/cultural identity/pride) and belongingness at school (liking school, perceiving a school and classroom environment as supportive, and perceiving teachers as supportive) (Durlak and Weissberg, 2007). Durlak and Weissberg concluded that extracurricular programs that focused on personal and social skill development resulted in "overall positive and statistically significant" student outcomes measured by "feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment, and school performance" (Durlak and Weissberg, 2007, p. 22).

Other researchers have reached conclusions similar Durlak and Weissberg's (2007) findings but also found that students must be engaged in the program (something Durlak and Weissberg's study did not evaluate) to achieve positive social outcomes and feelings of belongingness (Grogan, Henrich, & Malikina, 2014; Riggs, 2006). Before the Durlak and Weissberg (2007) study, Riggs (2006) studied the effects of an extracurricular program on rural Latino students with varying attendance in the program. While he described the program as effective (the program was sequential, active, focused, and explicit), he was concerned that

student attendance, a measure often not included in the research on extracurricular programs, had an impact on the outcomes of the program, making it difficult for students to develop belongingness in the program (Riggs, 2006). His data showed significant growth (social outcomes and feelings of belongingness) for student participants with high attendance rates but minimal social growth for students with lower attendance rates (Riggs, 2006).

Grogan et al. (2014) conducted a similar study, but they also evaluated student engagement within extracurricular programs. They found that enrolled students showed growth in their feelings and attitudes about their participation in the program (Grogan et al., 2014). Students who had higher attendance rates and engagement in the program showed the most growth and displayed more positive outcomes (Grogan et al., 2014). They also found that when students were interested in the program focus (i.e., art or sports), they were more engaged (Grogan et al., 2014).

Jordan (1999) not only noted that students displayed strong levels of engagement in the extracurricular activity but that this engagement extended to their engagement in school. According to Jordan (1999), participation in extracurricular sports “can increase students’ interest in school and improve their achievement” as well as “increase high school students' personal investments in education by providing them with additional opportunities for interaction with adults” (p. 67). This means these programs increase students' engagement in school and increase feelings of belongingness and support from school staff who often serve as coaches of extracurricular sports teams (Jordan, 1999).

While extracurricular programs, based on the research above, are an excellent opportunity for students to increase feelings of belongingness and engagement in both the program and in school, not all students have the opportunity to attend an effective extracurricular

program (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Grogan et al., 2014; Riggs, 2006). First, not all schools and communities offer extracurricular activities, and those that do may have limited space in the programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2010). As reported by the Afterschool Alliance (2010), nearly 19.4 million students would participate in extracurricular programs if a spot in a program were made available. Second, even in districts that offer extracurricular programs, some of these programs come at a cost to students and their families, excluding many low-income students from enrolling (Afterschool Alliance, 2010).

Additional and Reflective Staffing

Districts have also tried hiring additional and/or reflective school staff to improve student engagement (Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017; Gibson, 2005). These staff members are often representative of the school population and provide additional support to specific student and family groups (Gibson, 2005).

Additional staffing. When the budget allows, some schools have hired additional staff to support specific student groups. Examples of support staff include Hispanic liaisons, Black student achievement personnel, and family engagement specialists. There is a smaller student-to-staff ratio with additional staffing, allowing for more interaction and individualized attention and the opportunity for staff to get to know and form strong relationships with students (Goodenow, 1993). Staffing to support specific student groups can promote feelings of inclusion and care, mainly when the student(s) and staff belong to the same racial, cultural, or language group (Gibson, 2005).

Gibson's (2005) ethnographic study examined the impact of such staff members in supporting children of Mexican migrant workers in a high school in California. This school had developed the Migrant Education Program (MEP), which aimed to fight the marginalization of

these students, increase student engagement, and reinforce culture (Gibson, 2005). The staff members of MEP were from the high school community and were also children of migrant workers (Gibson, 2005). The purpose of hiring these individuals was to provide students with in-school mentors who had a shared experience and could better relate to student concerns (Gibson, 2005). Mexican migrant students were able to form strong relationships with the MEP staff, develop more positive perceptions of school, and set career goals that valued the importance of hard work and education (Gibson, 2005). While the students in MEP were able to show growth and prolonged engagement, this program could not reach all students in need of support (Gibson, 2005). It was expensive to pay additional staff and, as a supplemental program, could not overcome the overarching negative school culture (Gibson, 2005). Gibson suggests that, "to be successful, the entire school community must commit itself to fostering relations between teachers and students" (p. 599).

In my district, we have positions available in schools that serve a similar role to those at MEP. These positions include Family Liaisons (typically serving low-income students and families), Hispanic and Chin Liaisons (serving the immigrant and refugee students and families from Spanish-speaking countries and Myanmar, formally Burma), and Black Student Achievement Liaisons (working predominately with Black students and their families). While the idea of hiring additional staff members to support specific underserved groups is widespread, there is very little research justifying these roles or showing a positive impact.

Reflective staffing. Schools can also be intentional about hiring teachers that are representative of the student population. According to a recent study by Gershenson et al. (2017), Black students who have a Black teacher during their intermediate elementary schooling are 29%

less likely to drop out of school and more likely to have plans to attend college following graduation (Gershenson et al., 2017). This phenomenon is known as the *race match effect.*

The authors attribute such positive effects to students being able to see themselves in their teacher (as a role model) and teachers of color setting higher expectations for students of color (Gershenson et al., 2017). Students become aware of their teacher's beliefs and expectations at a young age, and their awareness of these expectations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Papageorge, Gershenson, & Kang, 2016). Students' understanding of these beliefs can directly impact a student's sense of support from their teachers and their belongingness in the classroom or school community (Furman, 1998; Hardiman, 2012; Hargreaves et al., 1996; Sanderson, 2021). And as discussed in chapter one, these increased feelings of belongingness can directly increase a student's academic engagement (Booker, 2007; Harris, 2006; Jimerson et al., 2000).

While research shows the benefits of the race match effect, there is a shortage of teachers of color in the United States (Wilder, 1999). Even when Black teachers are hired, their retention rate in the profession is much lower than that of their White colleagues (Benson, Salas & Siefert, 2020; Ingersoll & May, 2011). Wilder (1999) attributes this attrition to the negative schooling experiences of students of color. On a broad scale, adding and retaining teachers of color is not a simple fix. Instead, it would need to be addressed over time, on various levels of education (K-12 and higher education), including changes to teacher preparation programs and buy-in from individual districts (Benson et al., 2020; Keengwe, 2010; Wilder, 1999). However, with intentional recruitment and purposeful interviewing by school administration, a small number of teachers of color could be hired to work in a school building.

Changes to Staff Attitudes and Beliefs

While hiring support staff and teachers who reflect the student body could promote student belongingness and engagement, my school does not have the budget or pool of teachers to make this a reality. However, we do have monthly staff meetings in which we could develop a system to change staff attitudes and beliefs. This system would impact our current and future teachers (we are a Professional Development School and have many preservice teachers in the building), regardless of race or shared experiences.

Building a positive and inclusive classroom culture and positive relationships with students are two of the most beneficial things a teacher can do to engage students and ensure feelings of belongingness (Roberts, 2010). When students believe they are with a teacher who cares about them, they perform better academically, have higher attendance rates than their peers without the same feelings of care, and display fewer concerning behaviors (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Roberts 2010). However, building relationships and establishing a positive classroom culture can be challenging, especially when teachers differ significantly from the student population they serve (Howard, 2006). Preservice experiences do not always teach strategies for creating a positive environment (Keengwe, 2010). Therefore, additional training needs to occur in order for teachers to best support their students in their feelings and beliefs about school (Keengwe, 2010; Krownapple, 2016; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

Cultural competency. Culturally competent teachers understand the importance of addressing students' social and emotional needs and can build strong relationships with their students (Hardiman, 2012). As a result, they create a classroom environment that is inviting to all students, which increases student feelings of belongingness and creates positive perceptions of teachers by their students (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Culturally competent teachers can better support and engage their students than teachers who do not demonstrate cultural competency

(Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). They understand the importance of diversity and inclusion and make classroom and student decisions that take students' cultural needs into account (Hardiman, 2012; Krownapple, 2016). Within these classrooms, all stakeholders are involved and feel they contribute to the class's success (Emdin, 2011). Culturally competent teachers also set high standards and provide access to rigorous instruction for all students (Keengwe, 2010). This instruction creates opportunities for higher levels of engagement and trust in school staff (Howard & Terry, 2011).

Cultural competency is a mindset in which individuals can reflect on their own bias to understand differences between individuals and achieve equitable outcomes (Povenmire-Kirk, Bethune, Alverson, & Gutmann Kahn, 2015). It is a style of transformative leadership in which one's personal values, instructional practices, and outward behaviors align with including people with varying cultures different from one's own (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

When measuring cultural competence, many researchers refer to the Cultural Competence Continuum (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989; Krownapple, 2016). This continuum, designed by Cross et al. (1989) to address cultural competency issues in the health field, is frequently applied in education (See Figure 2). The lowest level on the continuum is cultural destructiveness, a term used to describe actions and behaviors that are destructive to the culture of others. The continuum continues with cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural pre-competence, cultural competence, and finally, cultural proficiency (Cross et al., 1989). While cultural proficiency is the end of the positive side of the continuum, one will never fully be culturally proficient because there is always room to grow (Krownapple, 2016).

Figure 3

Cultural Competence Continuum

In order for teachers to become culturally competent, a mindset shift often needs to occur in which teachers let go of impeding principles that they may value and begin to realize the importance of guiding principles (CampbellJones, CampbellJones, & Lindsey, 2010; Krownapple, 2016; Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, & Terrell, 2009). These impeding principles on the unhealthy side of the cultural proficiency continuum include beliefs that individuals create their problems or that culture is a challenge, whereas guiding principles, the healthy side of the continuum, include the realization that the system, or dominant culture, is more at fault (Krownapple, 2016; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Part of being a culturally competent teacher is understanding that teachers come to the table with their own culture, which may differ from the culture of the students they serve, but that their responsibility is to make sure their students, regardless of culture, feel as though they belong (Keengwe, 2010).

Culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy. As teachers begin developing and understanding their own cultural competence, they begin to understand a need to tailor their instructional practices to be more culturally competent. As discussed in chapter one, traditional teaching practices and curricula are rarely designed for or inclusive of students of color (Bachman, 1994; Emdin, 2015; McCarthy, 1990). As a result, students cannot see themselves in

the content and often do not see the importance or relevance of what they are learning, leading to disengagement and a lack of belongingness (Emdin, 2015; Furman, 1998; Hargreaves et al., 1996).

Culturally responsive teaching brings multiculturalism into the classroom (Banks, 2015; Gay, 2000). According to Gay (2000), "Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students" (p. 29).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is sometimes equated with culturally responsive teaching, but there is a difference in their definitions. Where culturally responsive teaching describes the attitudes and actions of including multiculturalism in a classroom, culturally relevant pedagogy is the way that teachers connect the curriculum and how it is taught to the reality of their students (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Culturally relevant teachers display a pedagogy of cultural competency and connect a student's lived experiences to the instructional content (Howard, 2003). Culturally relevant teaching is similar to *relational learning*, *reality pedagogy,* and *cultural congruence* and has sometimes been used interchangeably in other literature (Emdin, 2011; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981; Smyth, McInerney, & Fish, 2013).

Culturally relevant teaching is present in the classroom in a variety of ways. One way, described by Ladson-Billings (1994), is for teachers to "alter their speech patterns, communication styles, and participation structures" to better align with students' cultures (p. 16). This could include incorporating a call and response participation method, allowing students to use African American Vernacular English to express themselves in class projects, or using a popular music style to present new content (Carpenter Ford, 2013; Emdin, 2016; Hall & Damico,

2007). Carpenter Ford (2013) observed a teacher who incorporated oral strategies like call and response, talk-singing, verbal artistry like poetry and alliteration, and verbal dueling. These strategies mimicked student experiences in church and hip hop culture and allowed for cultural congruency, creating access to classroom discourse. The students in this class were more engaged and more likely to participate in class discussions than when more traditional teaching methods were used (Carpenter Ford, 2013).

Culturally relevant teaching is also apparent when teachers include real-world examples to provide students the opportunity to engage with the curriculum and content in an authentic manner (Hardiman, 2012; Howard & Terry, 2011). For example, if a culturally relevant teacher teaches low-income students in Harlem, they would likely include instruction in the context of the New York Subway system rather than the ski lifts of Aspen, Colorado. This instructional choice would have been made because the teacher understood the students' background and using something that students were familiar with (in this case, the New York Subway) could bring context or something familiar for the students to connect with (Howard, 2006).

However, it is important to caution that if teachers are not truly immersed or do not know their students, they might overgeneralize their beliefs and biases or stereotype their students in an attempt to be culturally relevant (Emdin, 2016). For example, just because a student is a Black male does not mean he likes basketball and rap, just as not all Hispanic males play soccer. “Teachers must work to recognize the beliefs, values, and behaviors that characterize the various cultures of their children” (Keengwe, 2010, p. 203). They need to get to know their students, their likes, dislikes, and interests, and incorporate these cultures that likely differ from their own into daily learning opportunities (Howard, 2006).

When culturally relevant teaching occurs, students are highly engaged and enthusiastic about their learning (Howard & Terry, 2011). Teachers who implement culturally relevant teaching practices in their classrooms can improve social and academic outcomes for their students (Keengwe, 2010), and students can build stronger bonds with their teachers and peers and develop a deeper understanding of the content (Emdin, 2015). According to many researchers in this field, implementing culturally related pedagogy into instruction is the next step in creating equity and engagement in the classroom (Emdin, 2011; Hardiman, 2012; Howard, 2006; Nuri-Robins et al., 2011). Culturally relevant teaching can develop cultural congruence between students' backgrounds and the instructional content (Smyth et al., 2013).

Student-Centered Teaching

In addition to culturally relevant pedagogy, teachers can also implement student-centered teaching practices. Student-centered teaching is a pedagogy where instruction shifts from the teacher, as the distributor of information, to the student, and it requires more rigorous input from students (Weimer, 2012). When students can choose how they complete a task or which task to complete, they are more engaged with their learning (Hardiman, 2012; Moley, Bandre, & George, 2011; Morgan, 2006; Sahin & Top, 2015). According to Moley et al. (2011), "Choice affects motivation, and motivation, when combined with cognitive competence and social interaction, leads to engagement" (p. 251). Student-centered teaching is a no-cost strategy that can be easy for teachers to implement in their classrooms (Lane, Royer, Messenger, Common, Ennis, & Swogger, 2015). Lane et al. (2015) reported that because of the ease of implementation and the opportunity for creativity presented, student-centered learning opportunities were perceived positively by both teachers and students. They found it improved students' understanding of the content on a deeper level, increased student interest in other academic

content areas, and helped students develop skills that would transcend their college and career aspirations (Sahin & Top, 2015).

Student voice. Providing students a platform for their voice allows them to be active participants in their education, increasing student feelings of belongingness in school (Mitra, 2004; Rudduck, 2007). Student voice allows students to make choices about their instruction and improves student-teacher relationships and classroom instruction (Fielding, 2001; Mitra, 2004; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). This opportunity aids in creating a positive classroom culture and, according to the work of Gillen, Wright, and Spink (2011), increases student engagement. Oldfather (1995) described students sharing their opinions about instruction based on how they learned best. The study showed that in allowing student voice in this manner, teachers learned how to better support students, students developed a greater sense of ownership over their learning, and previously disengaged students were re-engaged (Oldfather, 1995). Another study found a strong correlation between increased student voice and student feelings of belongingness (Lee & Zimmerman, 1999). This study also noted that some of the most disengaged students became some of the most active participants when their opinions were encouraged and heard (Lee & Zimmerman, 2001).

The benefit of using student voice as a tool for engaging learners is that every student, whether verbal or not, can make contributions to their learning (Kidd & Czerniawski, 2011). Students can use their voice to set academic goals, give feedback on school programs and teacher instruction, or share their opinions about current events (Kidd & Czerniawski, 2011; Mitra, 2004; Oldfather, 1995). With social media being so ingrained in students' lives, they are already used to having a voice, as compared to more traditional schooling of the past (Kidd & Czerniawski, 2011). Teachers need to be open to the idea of relinquishing some control by empowering

student voice, and they need to be ready to hear student ideas (favorable or not) and allow for action on those ideas, all while having trust in their students (Kidd & Czerniawski, 2011; Rudduck, 2007).

Student voice may also be nurtured by providing students an opportunity for choice on assignments (Sahin & Top, 2015). Choice, a form of differentiation, does not alter the student's learning outcomes, but may alter the student's path to achieve the learning outcome (Hardiman, 2012). For example, students can share their understanding of the events leading up to the American Revolution. Instead of the traditional essay or multiple-choice assessment, students might be allowed to demonstrate their understanding of these events by performing a skit or drawing a comic strip. The teacher can still evaluate each student's understanding of the events leading up to the American Revolution, but students can choose how they express these ideas and understandings (Hardiman, 2012).

Inquiry-based learning. Inquiry-based assignments provide another example of student-centered learning. During inquiry-based assignments, the task at hand is open-ended, and students work to discover meaning that can then be applied to new instruction or connected to previous learning or understanding (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). In the past, education was too often a "sit and get" experience where teachers would teach, and students would learn. Inquiry-based learning is a shift from the traditional classroom style of teacher modeling and students memorizing the procedure (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). Many teachers still teach within the traditional mindset, teaching whole group lessons and then providing worksheets for students to complete independently (Carson, Shih, & Langer, 2001).

Inquiry-based learning, like student voice, is a more innovative approach compared to traditional teaching and learning. It provides students the opportunity to construct their own

meaning by engaging in complex tasks to solve problems (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). Inquiry-based learning is connected to the real world, requiring teachers to be culturally responsive, and is a process that students are familiar with (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). This makes it easy for teachers to develop integrated tasks and reach across curricular standards (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). Inquiry-based learning is an effective motivator for students who are typically more challenging to engage (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). When participating in an inquiry-based learning task, students often work with their peers, collaborating on ideas and strategies and building relationships (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). Inquiry-based learning is a great way to prepare students for future careers (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

However, inquiry-based learning has come under attack in recent years. In some cases, teachers may be providing too much structure and guidance, detracting from the constructivist approach of this type of learning (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). Other criticisms have resulted from teachers not providing the necessary supports and scaffolds for students to be successful or teachers giving students too lofty of a question to solve with too little information or too few resources (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006). A third criticism stems from students not being adequately prepared to hold cooperative and productive conversations with their classmates (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). If teachers could receive the training necessary to implement inquiry-based learning properly and were provided the extra time for the instructional set-up that their students may require, inquiry-based learning might more regularly yield the results shown in Barron and Darling-Hammond's (2008) research.

Professional Development

While changes to staff attitudes and beliefs and implementing student-centered teaching

practices may help to engage and support students, and especially students of color, not all teachers are culturally competent, understand how to implement culturally relevant pedagogy, or feel comfortable giving up control of their classroom for a more student-centered approach to learning (Emdin, 2015; Howard, 2006; Gningue, Peach & Schroder, 2013). However, professional development and facilitation are tools that can equip teachers with this knowledge and understanding (Krownapple, 2016).

According to the equity standard laid out by the National Staff Development Council's (2001) Standards for Staff Development, the purpose of staff development is to support staff members in building equitable teaching and learning practices that support the learning of all students. However, in order for this professional development to be successful and enact the changes described in this definition, it "must focus on the content that teachers teach and the methods they use to teach the content, and it must be sufficiently sustained and linked to daily classroom practice to affect student learning" (Guskey, 2000, p. x). In a comprehensive review of professional development research, Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) concluded that professional development, when focused on content and methods, positively impacted teachers' learning and student learning and achievement. Weiner (2003) discussed how professional development can be transformative in helping teachers develop inclusive and positive learning environments in which the expectation is that all students, regardless of ability, can learn.

Therefore, if professional development is implemented in a way similar to what Guskey (2000) and Yoon et al. (2007) describe, it will not only help teachers to develop and strengthen their practice, but, when implemented, create a learning environment in which there are equitable expectations in a positive classroom environment in which all students can feel as though they

belong (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). It can help develop a shared mindset and culture among a group of professionals (Krownapple, 2016).

Professional development structure. The structure of professional development is also important. Staff need to work collaboratively, realize the importance of their learning through research and data, and practically apply what they learn (National Staff Development Council, 2001). Though it is important that professional learning not be an overbearing experience, effective professional learning occurs on a regular and consistent basis (National Staff Development Council, 2001). Supovitz and Turner (2000) conducted a study in which they evaluated professional development around science practices. Approximately 4,000 teachers and principals completed a survey of their feelings and beliefs around teaching science, their routine instructional practices, and their experience with science professional development (Supovitz & Turner, 2000). By analyzing the data, the authors discovered that the longer teachers participate in a professional development module, the more significant the change in their teaching practices.

Fishman, Marx, Best, and Tal (2003) present a model for professional development aimed at maximizing teacher learning and application for student learning. This model was designed for professional development around science instruction but lends itself to teacher learning about cultural competency and specific strategies to engage learners because of each of the components in its structure (Fishman et al., 2003). This model includes four components of professional development: content, strategies, sites, and media (Fishman et al., 2003). Content describes what the facilitators want the participants to learn; strategies specify the facilitator's actions, strategies, and protocols; sites indicate the setting of the professional development

(where and when); and media refers to the resources and materials used within the professional development (Fishman et al., 2003). To evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development, Fishman et al. (2003) gave surveys to teachers to measure their content knowledge and feelings and beliefs about what they had learned, conducted classroom observations to see the extent to which the strategies shared during the professional development were integrated into classroom instruction, and collected student performance data to determine whether the implementation of new strategies impacted student learning. The study indicated that teachers were able to implement the strategies taught during the professional development and that students were able to demonstrate greater levels of proficiency as a result of the implementation of new strategies.

In his recent book about the facilitation of cultural proficiency professional development sessions, Krownapple (2016) included a planning template for facilitators to use to design professional development sessions (p. 273). While it is specific to cultural proficiency and not based on a specific study, it mirrors Fishman et al.'s (2003) components of effective professional development in that it includes outcomes (described as content by Fishman et al., 2003), activities and protocols (described as strategies by Fishman et al., 2003), and content (described as media by Fishman et al., 2003).

Krownapple (2016) includes two additional key components, assessing culture and managing the dynamics of difference, which relate specifically to the essential elements laid out on the healthy side of the cultural competence continuum. Krownapple describes assessing culture as knowing the participants, yourself as the facilitator, and the group dynamics. This is important in order to plan authentic professional development that is appropriate and meaningful to participants. A list of "Who's Coming" questions is included to help the facilitator map out

where participants may be on the continuum of their cultural proficiency journey (Krownapple, 2016, p. 197). From this, the facilitator can then plan for managing the dynamics of difference. This happens by establishing a culture of trust and inquiry, modeling vulnerability, and facilitating deep conversations that drill down to the core of individuals' attitudes and beliefs (Krownapple, 2016).

Fishman et al. (2003) and Krownapple (2016) each cite the importance of both content and anticipated outcomes of professional development. Based on the positive effects of culturally competent teachers using culturally relevant pedagogy and student-centered teaching strategies, the professional development planned for this intervention should include these components. In considering the cultural proficiency continuum and the journey to cultural proficiency, teachers first must be led through a reflective process to uncover and understand their own biases (Howard, 2006; Nuri-Robins et al., 2011). From here, teachers can explore factors of student engagement and how they might be able to better engage students in their classrooms (i.e., through culturally relevant teaching or student-centered learning) (Emdin, 2015; Howard, 2006; Gningue et al., 2013). This professional development should include artifacts from the negative side of the Cultural Proficiency continuum and exemplars from the positive side to model the range for teachers and provide context for discussion and reflection (Keengwe, 2010; Nuri-Robins et al., 2011). Videos and other media should be included to share examples of how students are underserved and remedies for better serving this population of students (Emdin, 2015; Fishman et al., 2013; Keengwe, 2010).

Professional Development as an Intervention

As discussed in chapter one, students need to be engaged in their learning, need to feel as though they belong, and need to feel supported by the staff they work with. The needs

assessment study shared in chapter two found that while some students felt this way, there were disproportionalities between White students and students of color. Professional development provides the opportunity for teachers to learn about themselves, the cultures of their students, and best practices for teaching all students. It provides the opportunity for staff to learn and implement best practices to better engage students, create an environment that makes students feel as though they belong, and provides support to all students (Howard, 2003).

Professional development can provide all staff the opportunity to build their cultural competency and learn about culturally relevant teaching practices (Howard, 2003). It can be an avenue for embedding culturally competent practices into the culture of the district, individual schools, and everyday instruction (Krownapple, 2016).

Professional development around cultural proficiency is a reflective journey in which individuals understand themselves to understand others (Howard, 2003; Krownapple, 2016). Keengwe (2010) suggests that to develop cultural competency in staff, "specific training needs to be provided, including direct instruction, video and guest presentation, and 'hands on' workshops or lessons" (p. 203) to teach staff about cross-cultural interactions and best practices for working with diverse student populations. In order for teachers to move along the continuum, they must engage in a reflective process to understand their own thinking and realize how to appropriately apply this thinking in their classrooms to ensure equity (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). As these guiding principles are adopted, teachers begin to demonstrate proactive behaviors in line with the essential elements of cultural proficiency (CampbellJones et al., 2010; Krownapple, 2016; Lindsey et al., 2009). These proactive behaviors include assessing culture, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge (Krownapple, 2016).

Because student voice and inquiry-based learning practices are not common in traditional classrooms, teachers will need guidance and support in learning about and implementing such strategies. Teachers typically have the opportunity to learn about new skills in a small number of ways: through watching other teachers, through doing and reflecting, and through professional development (face-to-face and web-based) (Meirink, Meijer, Verloop, & Bergen, 2009). In thinking about providing teachers in an entire school building the opportunity to learn about and implement these strategies, it might be challenging to find the time for all teachers to observe another classroom to see these strategies implemented. Also, observation would not allow teachers to learn the theory and reasoning behind these strategies and could cause teachers to overgeneralize using these strategies in the classroom (i.e., allowing students to choose a game as the only way to recognize student voice). However, if teachers have the opportunity to hear the theory, reasoning, and benefits of these strategies, participate in discussions about how they might implement these strategies in the classroom, and ask questions about implementation, they might be more willing to try them out in their own classroom (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Robinson & Carrington, 2002; Van Eekelen, Vermunt, & Boshuizen, 2006). Therefore, professional development could be an excellent method for teachers to learn, collaborate, and expand their horizons to challenge and potentially change their current attitudes and beliefs about their teaching practices (student voice and inquiry-based practices) and their students (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Krownapple, 2016).

Conclusion

Issues of equity exist across the country, especially when looking at disproportionalities in student engagement (McMurrey, 2014). Students are becoming disengaged, lacking a feeling of belongingness in their classrooms, and are developing negative perceptions of teachers

(Archambault et al., 2009; Vallerand et al., 1997). This is not just a national issue or an issue found in other schools, but an issue found in the school where I teach. As shared in chapter two, students of color at my school were less engaged, lacked belongingness, and did not have the same belief of support from their teachers compared to their White peers' responses.

This chapter shared research on interventions, both successful ones and others that were ineffective. These interventions vary in the amount of time and money that would be required. Interventions aimed at recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers of color, while proven to be effective at engaging students of color and increasing achievement, will require a significant amount of time to come to fruition and develop partnerships between districts and universities. While hiring and retaining more teachers of color should be a goal of the district where I work, and it is something that I can advocate for, it is not something that I can impact or control in my current role in the school system.

However, districts can invest time and money to provide professional development for teachers focused on cultural competency, culturally relevant pedagogy, and student-centered teaching practices. Effects may be seen more quickly than a hiring intervention, and a positive culture can be created in which all students can be successful in school (Hardiman, 2012; Howard, 2003; Keengwe, 2010; Krownapple, 2016; Lane et al., 2015). Professional development can help teachers learn to increase student engagement and build positive classroom environments where all students can thrive (Morgan, 2006; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015), and it is something that I can impact and implement to serve the students in my school. If we make students, especially marginalized students, the center of their school experience, they will develop greater feelings of belongingness, engagement, and support at school (Hardiman, 2012; Moley, Bandre, & George, 2011; Morgan, 2006; Sahin & Top, 2015).

Chapter Four: Intervention Procedure and Program Evaluation Methodology

There are disparities in engagement, feelings of belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support with students of color compared to their White peers (Appleton et al., 2006; Fredericks et al., 2004). Chapter three discussed various potential interventions to address these disparities with professional development for teachers and focused on cultural competency as one way to intervene in this context.

This specific intervention was designed for teachers to reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs to become more culturally competent, become more culturally responsive, and implement responsive practices (i.e., student voice and inquiry-based practices) into their instruction (Keengwe, 2010; Krownapple, 2016). As a result of these professional development sessions, it was anticipated that teachers' attitudes and beliefs about their students and their teaching practices would change (Emdin, 2011; Howard, 2006; Howard & Terry, 2011) which would in turn assist in increasing student engagement, belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support.

Outline of Intervention and Timeline

Grant Support

Currently, our local union and school system partner to provide first-year teachers with ongoing professional learning opportunities. We also have a strong support system for teachers who wish to pursue their National Board candidacy. However, teachers cannot begin their National Board candidacy until at least their fourth year of teaching. To fill the professional learning gap for teachers (after their first year of required professional learning and before they can apply for National Board candidacy and receive professional learning support through our National Board support network), our local union applied for and received a three-year Great Public Schools (GPS) grant from the National Education Association (NEA). Year one of the

grant included participants learning more about the benefits of the local union, culturally competent teaching practices, and the National Board candidacy process. The needs assessment results and the need for students of color to be more engaged, build belongingness within their classrooms, and feel supported by their teachers were the basis for developing professional development content around culturally competent teaching practices. The primary outcomes of year one were to connect participants to the local union and support them in applying for their National Board candidacy by providing professional learning in cultural competency, one of the grounding tenets of the National Board standards. Our outcomes for the professional learning were for participants to build awareness of their current attitudes and beliefs, make progress in moving along the cultural competence continuum, and implement new teaching practices that would positively impact their students.

During years two and three of the grant, the year one participants who decided to pursue National Board candidacy had the cost of their candidacy paid for and received direct and individualized after-school professional development and support in their home schools as they worked through the National Board process. The grant was also implemented in two other schools, based on the initial school's feeder pattern, within the three years of the grant funding, which included a middle school that implemented the professional development program in year two and a high school that implemented the professional development program in year three.

I am a classroom teacher at the school where the data for this study was collected. However, in addition to my teaching role I co-led a team of staff to apply for, implement, and report on this grant. As part of this team, I developed the professional development materials for this grant, facilitated the professional development, and managed the grant at the school level by collecting required data and artifacts and reporting the data throughout the grant reporting cycles.

My role in the school and this grant provides unique insight into the data collected. I was both a colleague to participants and the professional development facilitator, making me a researcher-practitioner participant-observer in this research. This allowed me to build quick trust and rapport with the participants, which is important in collecting accurate and complete qualitative data and making sense of what was observed and collected (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Polkinghorne, 2007; Webster & Metrova, 2007).

This dissertation analyzes existing data collected from the first year of the grant to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development around cultural competency. While there is additional data from the first year of the grant about the local union and National Board candidacy, only grant data about the research questions in this study will be analyzed. An in-depth review of how the grant team developed the cultural competency professional learning and how the data collected from the grant was analyzed to determine the effectiveness of this professional learning will come later in this chapter.

Intervention Development and Plan

Logic Model

A logic model was developed as a visual to shed light on how I expected the professional learning to impact teacher and student outcomes. In this model, the problem (situation) came from the results of the needs assessment study discussed in chapter two. Inputs included approval from administration, the time and location for the professional learning to take place, participants for this research study, and, if possible, funding to pay the participants. The activities, or professional learning topics, were developed as a result of the information gleaned in the literature review completed in chapter three. There were eight main topics: defining equity, understanding bias, disparities in classroom data, knowing the learner, teaching the learner,

student voice, student choice, and inquiry-based teaching. The anticipated outcomes of implementing this professional learning include changes in the attitudes and beliefs of teachers about their students, changes to the instructional practices teachers are implementing in the classroom, and more positive student outcomes observed by their teachers.

This logic model includes assumptions that could potentially impact or impede the process, including that the teacher participants are not already culturally competent and are not already implementing these practices into their instruction and interactions with students. According to Emdin (2011), Howard (2006), and Howard and Terry (2011), teachers who implement culturally competent practices are better able to engage and support students of color. The fact that the findings in the needs assessment study in chapter two uncovered racial disparities in student engagement and belongingness could indicate that some teachers working in this school lack the cultural competence to engage and support all learners. Another assumption is that teachers will find this professional learning valuable and regularly attend the scheduled professional learning sessions, something necessary for high fidelity. According to the National Staff Development Council (2001), school staff are more likely to attend optional professional learning when they find value in the professional development and can make connections to their field of practice. Therefore, if staff do not find this professional learning valuable, they may not attend.

External factors could also impact this professional learning and my ability to implement it within the school where I teach. These factors could include our district changing their priority and vision and no longer prioritizing (or allowing) professional learning around cultural competence or our school-level administration changing and no longer allowing the grant to continue in the school. Another external factor could include a lack of interest or follow-through

from school-level stakeholders (staff, administrators, and/or grant facilitators), resulting in the termination of the funding of this work. A copy of the logic model can be found in Appendix F.

Format of Sessions

The format of each session was the same. Each session (except for session one, in which this structure was established) began with a Community Circle with the same three prompts: How are you feeling today? Give one word that describes our content the last time we were together. How are the children? The first two questions were to engage the group and remind them of the work we have been doing. The last question was adapted from a custom of the Maasai tribe and was intentionally included to center the group's thinking around the topic of students and student well-being (Westat, 2016). This circle served to build community within our group and center the group and as a model strategy for one way that teachers could provide student voice in their classrooms. An agenda laying out the day's activities followed the Community Circle. The first agenda item for each session was an entrance ticket as a follow-up from the previous session. This entrance ticket served as a data collection tool and a way to review the content from the previous session, and it allowed participants to share stories of implementation and/or responses from students.

The bulk of the remainder of the session followed the Culturally Proficient Event Design template outlined in Krownapple's (2016) book, *Guiding Teams to Excellence with Equity: Culturally Proficient Facilitation*. This template includes both planning components as well as actual stages, or sections, for engaging participants. The planning components include (a) assessing culture, (b) goals, (c) outcomes, (d) indicators of success, (e) content, (f) protocol(s), and (g) activities. These are the "what" of planning, meaning that this is what the professional development session will do (or intends to do). Assessing culture is a way to think about who is

coming and determine what strengths and/or limitations they may bring. This is important in planning so appropriate methods are used to move participants along the cultural proficiency continuum (Cross et al., 1989; Krownapple, 2016). Using this template, the goals, outcomes, and indicators of success are then set as what is intended, or anticipated, to come as a result of the session. These are the integral components intended to drive the actual content of the session. Each session's goals and indicators of success were written into the GPS NEA grant as our intended outcomes of the program. They were compliance goals and based on the reported actions of participants (e.g., 100% of participants will learn about their biases).

Decisions about instructional content followed the goals, outcomes, and indicators of success of each session. This content included articles, videos, and data. The activities then served as a transition to the "how" of the professional development. Activities included group discussion, data analysis, surveys, and other content that transformed the learning into action (described in detail later in this chapter).

This content and these activities were then developed into the "stages" of the professional development using Krownapple's (2016) Culturally Proficient Event Design. These professional development lesson stages included activate and engage, explore and discover, and organize and integrate (Krownapple, 2016). The tone was set during the activate and engage stage. This was when the topic was introduced, and participants were (likely) exposed to something new. During the next stage, explore and discover, a discussion was usually had around the topic to explore diverse ways of thinking. Data and experiences were brought to the table to analyze the topic and develop a collective understanding. And finally, in the last stage, organize and integrate, this collective understanding was developed into action. Participants identified an issue, accepted it as an issue, and then decided on steps to enact change in their classrooms and teaching practices.

The organize and integrate stage served as the ending or closure of the session. Participants were charged with implementing what was discussed into their own classrooms and/or instruction. At the end of each session, one participant summarized the session for the group, and then participants completed the exit tickets (see Appendices G and H).

Each of the topics covered and a general layout of the stages can be found in Appendix I. As can be seen on this layout, while each session followed the stages described by Krownapple's (2016) *Culturally Proficient Event Design*, so did the entire program design. Sessions one through three served as a way to activate and engage, sessions four through six served as a way to explore and discover, and sessions seven through nine served as a way to organize and integrate (session ten was designed for reflection, a time for end of program data collection, and not part of the Culturally Proficient Event Design).

While the formatting and design of these sessions were developed using the Culturally Proficient Event Design template designed by Krownapple (2016), the components of this design align with the literature discussed in chapter three. For example, Krownapple's (2016) planning components align directly with the components that Fishman et al. (2003) found to be successful when developing professional learning: content, strategies, sites, and media. Additionally, guidance from the National Staff Development Council (2001) provides a structure where staff are first realizing the importance of the learning and then applying their learning to their practice; similar to Krownapple's (2016) stages of participant engagement.

Content of Sessions

An overview of the content of the sessions can be found in the Professional Development Sessions Layout (see Appendix I) and is described in more detail in the session descriptions

below. The sessions descriptions include the plan for what was to happen and not necessarily what did happen. Any deviations from the plan will be discussed in the next chapter.

The order of topics was determined to be the best method for developing cultural competence, as it simulated the inside-out approach as described by Howard (2003) and Krownapple (2016). Using the inside-out approach, I first asked teachers to reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs (biases). Next, teachers were asked to reflect on their own practices and how well they were, or were not, serving their students. The purpose of this was for teachers to start to uncover how potential biases or possible inequitable practices may have been present in their own classroom(s) and negatively impacting their students. Next, student-centered teaching practices of student voice and inquiry-based learning were introduced, and teachers discussed ways to implement these strategies into their daily instruction to address the disparities found (i.e., engagement, belongingness, perceptions of teacher support). The collective experience of participating in this professional learning community was meant to change the attitudes and beliefs of participants and provide strategies and opportunities to promote student engagement, feelings of belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support.

Session 1: Norming and community. The purpose of this session was to build community and establish norms. These are both best practices in developing any professional learning community, especially where difficult topics might be discussed, to help participants feel more comfortable within the group (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Gregory & Kuzmich, 2007; Krownapple, 2016).

Activate and engage. The plan for this stage first included teaching participants the structure of a community circle, a technique that would begin each session. The next step in this stage included sharing information with participants about the grant and grant data and

collaboratively setting dates for the upcoming sessions. This collaboration aimed to create buy-in and ensure that all group participants were available on the days of the professional learning sessions.

The final planning of this stage was to develop norms for the group. The plan included discussing what norms are and how they help structure our time together. The purpose of norming was to establish the foundation and culture from which our group worked (DuFour, et al., 2005; Gregory & Kuzmich, 2007; Krownapple, 2016).

Explore and discover. Participants were meant to develop their own educational timeline, highlighting important events within their educational careers and noting specific experiences and feelings along the way. Time was included for participants to share their timelines, discuss similarities and differences among timelines, and discuss how our timelines might compare to the timelines of our students. The purpose of this activity was to set the tone to open teachers' minds to the importance of engagement, belongingness, and perceptions of teachers in their own academic careers to make connections between our experiences and what our students might, or might not, be experiencing.

Organize and integrate. The next activity was to share a video clip titled, "How are the Children?" in which the Maasai greeting is explained. Time was included for participants to discuss their reactions to the video, what they believed would happen if we (nation-wide, district-wide, and school-wide) selected this greeting, and whether we would be able to respond that all the children are well. The purpose of this last activity was to center the group around the needs of our students and set the foundation for our learning that would be responsive so that we would be able to answer that "all the children are well." This greeting was included in our community

circle for the remainder of the sessions for the purpose of re-centering our work around our students at the start of each session.

Session 2: Defining equity. The purpose of this session was to begin exploring the inside aspect of the inside-out approach (Howard, 2003; Krownapple, 2016) and for participants to build their own definition of equity and see how it is present in our school and in their classroom. The strong majority of teachers believe that equity is important but are not familiar with effective strategies for incorporating it in their classroom (Scholastic, 2016). Teachers who implement equity provide inclusive opportunities for students and create a community of belonging where each student is provided with what they need (Atchison, Diffey, Rafa, &Sarubbi, 2017). As discussed in chapter one, students who feel included and supported have stronger belongingness in the classroom community and display higher levels of classroom engagement (Spilt, Hughes, Wu, & Kwok, 2012; Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997).

Activate and engage. During this first stage, the plan was for participants to reflect on what they believed accomplished teaching to be. There was time for participants to draw a picture of what they believe an accomplished teacher would look like that could include words, phrases, and other pictures to enhance their picture. Time was included for participants to share their illustrations and describe how accomplished teaching was depicted in their illustrations.

The plan then included using the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' (NBPTS) Architecture of Accomplished Teaching diagram (see Appendix J) and the NBPTS' Standard 2: Respect for Diversity. The purpose of this activity was to illustrate that the Architecture for Accomplished Teaching and the Standards for National Board Certification supported the supposition that good teachers provide equity and access for all students, engage

students in their learning, and build a strong classroom community in which all students feel as though they belong.

Explore and discover. Following this activity, participants were presented with the Equality vs. Equity drawing (see Appendix K). After viewing this picture, time was provided to make comparisons between the equality and equity sides of the picture. Next, the plan included time for participants to write their own definitions for equality and equity based on what they saw in the picture. Time was provided to discuss the definitions and agree, as a group, on common definitions of the terms.

Organize and integrate. The plan for this stage included time for participants to reflect on a typical school day (or week) and add ideas to a Padlet of things in the school/classroom that were equal and that were equitable. The plan included space on the Padlet for participants to also add any questions or comments. Time was included for participants to add their ideas and for a discussion about the ideas that were added. The plan included having the cultural competence continuum shared and a description of the cultural blindness stage (and how it related to equality). The plan also included time to discuss why equity, and not just equality, is essential in schools and how this concept applied to us as teachers.

Session 3: Understanding bias. During this session, participants learned what biases are and how they may impact their work, uncovered any racial biases they may have had, and developed a plan to address these biases. This is the last session in Krownapple's (2016) activate and engage phase. The purpose of this activity was to help build awareness in teachers so that they might be able to reflect on whether their potential biases impacted the ways that they interacted with and supported students, as well as the perceptions that they had of their students and that their students might have had of them. Teachers need to be aware of their biases and

make sure their biases are not impacting their work with students in the classroom (Emdin, 2016; Moore, Michael, & Penick-Parks, 2018; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). If teachers have unchecked biases, they might affect the way students are disciplined in class (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) or the level of challenge students are given (Burgess, 1983; Hallam & Ireson, 2005; Oakes, 1985), both directly impacting the level of engagement and belongingness that students experience in their classroom.

Activate and engage. This plan was for participants to develop a definition of bias. This plan included an organizer in which participants combined their own understanding of bias with a more formal definition of bias and then developed a common group definition of the term. Time was provided in the plan for participants to work independently on their definitions and then work collaboratively. Next, participants completed Harvard's Implicit Association Test (IAT) for Race online and completed the organizer using the same structure used to develop the common definition (current understanding, input, reflection). It was anticipated that some participants might not feel comfortable taking the IAT and could either opt out of this activity and/or skip certain demographic questions in the IAT (which would still allow them to continue with the survey). Participants who opted out were asked to read an article explaining bias and the different types of bias.

Explore and discover. For participants who wished to take the IAT, the plan was for them to reflect on any biases they felt they might have, and if they believed they had biases, to reflect on whom those biases may be towards. After taking the IAT, participants recorded their results and then reflected on how they felt about their results.

The IAT is a tool developed to potentially uncover a person's bias based on the speed of their association between pictures and words and has been used in hundreds of studies since it

was developed (Azar, 2008). While some believe strongly in the psychometric scoring and results of the IAT (Azar, 2008), others are critical of the tool's reliability and validity (Blanton, Jaccard, Klick, Mellers, Mitchell, & Tetlock, 2009). The purpose of participants using the IAT during this session was not to uncover definite biases, or use their results for this study, but rather to potentially create cognitive dissonance when what the participant believed about their biases turned out to be different from the results of the IAT. By creating this discomfort and providing time for reflection, the hope was that participants would build awareness of potential biases and develop a plan to combat them (Moore, et al., 2018; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

Organize and integrate. A group discussion was then planned in which participants would not be asked to share their results (although they could if they wished) but would be asked to share their feelings and whether they expected the results they received. It was planned that participants would have the opportunity to commit to change as a result of their IAT score and share what their next steps would be.

Session 4: Disparities in the classroom. This was the first session in Krownapple's (2016) explore and discover phase. The purpose of this session was to continue to build awareness in participants and provide the opportunity to see how their current practices, and their potential biases, might have affected the students in their classroom. If certain students were over or underrepresented in certain data, teachers could reflect on some of the root causes of these disparities and make instructional changes or decisions that would help to remedy these disparities. As shared in chapter one, students are often aware of disparities, and the presence of these disparities impacts their engagement and belongingness at school (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lopez, 2003).

Activate and engage. The plan was for participants to learn the definition of disparity and look at how disparities are present in aspects of life outside of education (e.g., health disparities) and some of the common disparities found in schools (e.g., discipline).

Explore and discover. Participants were to bring data from their own classrooms (e.g., timeouts given this quarter, test or standardized assessment scores, students receiving intervention or curriculum extension supports) and organize this data using at least two different parameters (i.e., race and gender). It was then planned that participants would use their data chart to determine if any disparities were present.

Organize and integrate. A discussion was planned where participants could share their data and any of the findings and/or possible disparities that they might have uncovered. Participants were then given time to develop a plan for addressing disparities that might have been found and share their plan with the group.

Session 5: Knowing the learner. This session emphasized the importance of teachers knowing their students. The purpose of this session was for teachers to be intentional in changing their instructional practices and seeing the value in getting to know their students. Taking the time to get to know students shows students that they are cared about and helps them feel like they are a valued member of the classroom (Banks, 1993; Emdin, 2015; Hardiman, 2012). This sense of belongingness can improve academic outcomes (Booker, 2007; Harris, 2006; Jimerson et al., 2000).

Activate and engage. The plan included a group reading of the poem, “Cause I Ain’t Got a Pencil,” by Joshua T. Dickerson. This poem is written from the perspective of a student who overcomes many obstacles in the morning to get himself to school, only to be yelled at by his teacher for not having a pencil. Time was included to discuss how we thought the student might

feel, how we felt as a result of reading the poem, and what we, as teachers, could do to engage and support students like the one in this poem to make them feel as though they belonged and were supported at school.

Explore and discover. Following the poem, I planned for participants to work independently to list things they believed teachers should know about our students. Time was included to discuss, as a group, why these things were important to know about our students and what we could do to engage our students and get to know them in these ways. The plan was for participants to work together, in partners or trios, to find or develop an open-ended assessment and/or activity that would allow them to gather information that they had identified as important to know about their students. The purpose of developing an open-ended assessment is to allow students to answer freely beyond the confines of what or how a teacher may expect (stereotype) a student to answer.

Organize and integrate. The plan was for participants to share their assessments/activities developed during this session and then commit to implementing them with their students before the next session.

Session 6: Teaching the learner. This was the last session in Krownapple's (2016) explore and discover phase, with upcoming sessions moving into the organize and integrate phase, the last stage of his planning guide. It is important for teachers to know their students and then use this knowledge to teach them and integrate their interests into their learning (Banks, 1993; Emdin, 2015; Hardiman, 2012). This not only impacts teacher practice but may also work to better engage more students in the classroom (Emdin, 2015).

Activate and engage. I planned for participants to take part in a stand-up/sit-down activity. Statements were read, with possible findings from their student assessment/activity

(e.g., I learned if my students prefer to work alone or in groups). Participants were to stand up if it was information they uncovered about their class or an individual student and sit down if it was information that was not uncovered or relevant to their assessment or class.

Explore and discover. The plan was for participants to each share the findings from the assessment/activity they created during session five and what they learned about their students. Time was included for participants to reflect upon students or student groups that they were serving well, meaning students or student groups that preferred the current teaching practices in the classroom (those that felt comfortable within the school setting and were engaged in their learning) based on the findings of their assessment(s).

Organize and integrate. Time was provided for discussion to reflect on current teaching practices and for participants to commit to making adjustments that would better serve and engage each of their students. As per the plan, participants would reflect on practices that would remain the same, practices that would need to change, and practices that should occur more or less frequently in the classroom.

Session 7: Student voice. The purpose of this session was to provide participants with another practice to implement in their classroom. When student voice is accepted in the classroom, it can help engage students and invite them to participate more (Lee & Zimmerman, 2001). Therefore, by changing their practice teachers may affect students as well.

Activate and engage. I planned for participants to start this session by watching a quick video about student voice from the Californians for Justice Student Movement on Student Voice twice. The first time, the plan was for participants to just listen for the message in the video. The second time, the plan was for participants to use a speech bubble template to write down one of the messages, or quotes, that struck them. We then had time for a discussion where participants

were able to share what they had written on their speech bubble templates. It was also planned to discuss a time when they did and did not feel as though their voice was heard, and how each of those experiences made them feel.

Explore and discover. The plan was for participants to then learn about the three levels of the acceptance of student voice. This first level is giving students the platform, or opportunity, to share their voice. In the classroom, this could come about by a teacher having a community circle and asking students how they feel the teacher could better support them. However, just giving students a platform for voice is not enough for students to feel heard (Mitra, 2004; Rudduck, 2007). Teachers must recognize student voice as a critical part of the educational conversation and be willing to make changes suggested by the students, thus recognizing student voice (Kidd & Czerniawski, 2011; Rudduck, 2007). The highest level of student voice is teachers helping to amplify student voice. For example, the teacher who solicited feedback about her teaching from her students in the community circle could then change her instructional strategies to reflect these suggestions, making sure to let the students know that these changes resulted from their communication.

Organize and integrate. The plan was for participants to use what they learned about student voice to develop ideas for how student voice could be present, or implemented, in their classroom. The plan was that teachers would use the levels of student voice to make changes to their current instructional strategies to amplify this voice. Time was provided for participants to share their concept maps and add additional ideas that their colleagues may share. The plan was to then ask participants to commit to one or two ideas from their concept map that they would implement in the classroom before our next session.

Session 8: Student choice. Students can express their voice by making their own educational choices (Hardiman, 2012; Sahin & Top, 2015). In this session, participants reflected on their current thinking about student choice and learned additional ways to empower their students by allowing them to make more choices for themselves. This session aimed to provide teachers with an instructional practice to try in their classroom and impact student outcomes. As discussed in chapter three, providing student choice can result in higher levels of engagement in students (Hardiman, 2012; Moley et al., 2011).

Activate and engage. The plan was for participants to begin this session by reading a story and *choosing their own adventure* (making decisions that would lead them to a different part of the story based on their decisions). Given different scenarios in which a student was upset, participants decided whether they would give the student a choice (hopefully de-escalating the situation) or force them into only one choice, likely resulting in a power struggle. Time was provided to discuss the likely outcomes for each of the possible choices, why the selected choice was the most appropriate for the situation, and whether the educational outcomes remained the same as a result of the choice that was made.

Explore and discover. Next, it was planned for participants to watch the video *Ways to Empower Students with Choice* and determine whether the ten ways shared in the video would be appropriate for our (elementary) students. The plan was to create a group list of ways that student choice could be implemented in the classroom.

Organize and integrate. At the end of the session, it was planned that participants would commit to at least five ways to incorporate student choice in the classroom and write their commitments on a weekly organizer so they could take them back to the classroom to try before our next session.

Session 9: Inquiry-based learning. This was the last session of content for this professional learning experience. The purpose was to bring all of the concepts we had previously learned and apply them to the concept of inquiry-based learning. This was also the last session in Krownapple's (2016) organize and integrate phase. Inquiry-based learning is an instructional practice that might be new for teachers and, after learning about it, might be something they will regularly implement in their classrooms. Inquiry-based learning opportunities impact students by motivating and engaging them in classroom tasks (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

Activate and engage. It was planned that participants would watch a video about the foundational and structural components of inquiry-based learning. Time was provided to reflect on this video and why inquiry-based learning might benefit their teaching context.

Explore and discover. It was planned that participants would work independently to look at their upcoming units and standards and plan a lesson in which inquiry-based learning could be embedded.

Organize and integrate. It was planned that participants would share their lesson plan with the group and commit to implementing it in their classrooms before our final session.

Session 10: Reflection. This was the final session. The plan was that participants would bring a food item to share with the group that was important to them or their family. Time was provided for participants to eat while sharing why their food was important to them or their family. The plan was then to hold our final community circle and have participants complete their entrance ticket to reflect on the content (and their implementation) of session nine and the end of program evaluation (see Appendix L). The plan was to use the responses on the program evaluation to guide the conversation of our focus group discussion.

Research Design

Mixed Methods Design

A mixed-methods concurrent triangulation design was used to guide this study. This design was appropriate because when qualitative and quantitative data are used together, it strengthens the study's findings and uses qualitative data to complement and validate the quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In using this method, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed separately and then compared to develop triangulated, cross-validated findings. This design is essential due to my role as researcher-practitioner. Mathison (1988) suggests that triangulation is important with researcher-practitioner researchers because it is a way to ensure that the observations are properly interpreted, and research is not over-reliant on their observations and knowledge of the setting.

The content of the professional development sessions is the independent variable. I hypothesize that this content will change teacher attitudes and beliefs, teacher instructional practices, and student responses (engagement and feelings of belongingness), so these constructs function as the dependent variables. The following research questions were designed to address both the process and anticipated outcomes:

Process Evaluation Questions.

1. Did the professional development take place as planned?
2. Was each key session implemented as planned?

Outcome Evaluation Questions.

3. How do teacher perceptions of their attitudes and beliefs change as a result of participating in this professional development?
4. How do teacher participants believe their instructional practice changed as a result of this professional development?

5. How do teacher participants perceive their students were impacted as a result of this professional development?
6. What did participants perceive to be the most effective elements of the professional development at changing their attitudes, beliefs, and practices?

Methods

Participants

When writing the NEA GPS grant, we received funding to have ten teachers from one school participate in this professional learning. The plan was to invite all early career teachers in the school (classroom-based teachers who had been in the district or profession for five or fewer years) to an information session that explained the focus and structure of the program. The goal was that of these 21 teachers, ten would commit to this paid, year-long professional development program.

Since this professional development occurred outside of the school day, participants were paid for their time. Teachers were paid $20 per hour, which our District office mandates for "workshop," or professional development time. Therefore, teachers were compensated $30 per session (90 minutes), which came to $300 total for the entire program if they attended all ten sessions.

Measures and Instrumentation

Fidelity of implementation. Fidelity is important when implementing an intervention because it determines "how well an intervention is implemented compared to the original program design" (O'Donnell, 2008, p. 33). It is vital to develop process evaluation questions, define fidelity of implementation in context, and identify indicators of fidelity of the

intervention's implementation (Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco, & Hansen, 2003; O'Donnell, 2008; Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004).

For this intervention, fidelity is defined as the extent to which this intervention was implemented as planned. The indicators of fidelity are described below. High fidelity would show close alignment with the intervention design, while low fidelity would vary or stray from the intervention design (O'Donnell, 2008). To determine the fidelity of this specific intervention, I needed to assess the delivery of the professional development in terms of the two process evaluation questions listed below:

1. Did the professional development take place as scheduled? (Dose)
2. Was each key session implemented as planned? (Adherence)

Indicators of dose. This indicator was to be used to determine whether the professional development took place as scheduled. This included whether the number of sessions planned were implemented, whether they took the time they were scheduled to take, and whether participants were present for each session. For this study, indicators of high fidelity would be for all ten sessions to occur, each for an hour and a half, and for all six participants to be present for each session and for the duration of the session.

Indicators of adherence. This indicator determined whether the program's implementation of content was consistent with its design. Adherence is important because it ensures that key design components were implemented as they had been planned (Dusenbury et al., 2003). Indicators of high fidelity in this study would be if all agenda items were covered during each session.

Instruments for fidelity. To inform the process evaluation questions, sign-in sheets were used to monitor attendance, and lesson plans/agenda checklists were used to measure the fidelity of implementation (see Appendix M).

Process evaluation questions. Additional instruments used to answer the outcome evaluation questions are thoroughly described in this section and can also be found in Appendix N. These instruments were designed to provide information related to the goals of the grant, and have not been used in other research, but are being analyzed for this dissertation to determine:

1. How do teacher perceptions of their attitudes and beliefs change as a result of participating in this professional development?
2. How do teacher participants believe their instructional practice changed as a result of this professional development?
3. How do teacher participants perceive their students were impacted as a result of this professional development?
4. What did participants perceive to be the most effective elements of the professional development at changing their attitudes, beliefs, and practices?

Changing attitudes and beliefs. It is hypothesized that participants' attitudes and beliefs will change as a result of this professional learning. One expected change is that teachers will build awareness and understand the importance of the content and strategies covered during this professional learning. Another anticipated change is that teachers will see the importance of reflecting on and evaluating their current instructional practices.

Two exit tickets were created and combined (copied back to back) to make it easier for participants to complete at the end of each session. One of the exit tickets (see Appendix H) is a chart with three boxes with sentence starters and room for participants to write in their responses.

The first box says, “I used to think…” the second box says, “Now I think…” and the third box says “Because…” This instrument helped to measure how teachers' attitudes and beliefs changed due to this professional development, as they were asked to directly state how their beliefs or ideas changed as a direct result of what was covered in the session. If teachers did not feel that their attitudes or beliefs changed, they were asked to write why their thinking had not changed.

Reflective field notes are also an instrument used to measure participants’ changing attitudes and beliefs. Group discussion was built into the structure of this professional learning. A protocol for collecting these field notes was used (see Figure 4) and, if participants mentioned something about how their attitudes and beliefs had changed, I recorded it in the field notes.

Figure 4

Reflective Field Notes Protocol

Reflective Field Notes Protocol

1. During each session, have a notebook available to record specific quotes or information shared that relates to the research questions.

2. Immediately following each session, transfer the information captured in the notebook to the session database.

3. Include additional observations and notes related to…
    a. The attitude or mood of the participants
    b. The overall tone of the session
    c. Components of the Professional Development that may have occurred differently than planned.
    d. Timing of each of the sessions
    e. Comments made by participants that may or may not have been captured in one of the instruments.
    f. Reflections for how the session might be changed to improve it for the following Professional Development groups.

Finally, the end of program evaluation (see Appendix L) and focus group are instruments to measure participants' changing attitudes and beliefs. Statements two and three on the end of

program evaluation say “I was able to learn something new each session” and “My attitudes and/or beliefs about my students changed as a result of this professional development program.” Participants were asked to complete a Likert scale for each question. After each of these statements and rating scales, participants were asked to explain their response. During the focus group (see the focus group protocol in Appendix O), participants were asked to share some of the specific things they learned and why they did or did not believe that their attitudes and beliefs changed due to this professional learning.

Changing instructional practices. It is hypothesized that, as a result of this professional learning, participants will change their instructional practices. It is anticipated that these changes will include ways in which teachers interact with their students and provide differentiated and engaging opportunities during instruction.

An entrance ticket was developed (see Appendix P) to allow participants to share how their teaching practices may have changed and how this change in practice impacted the students they work with. The content of the prior session was listed at the top of the entrance ticket. Participants were asked to respond to the first question: “How did you implement this within your teaching context?”

As with the prior construct, reflective field notes were also used to measure participants’ changing instructional practices. If participants mentioned something during a discussion in the professional development sessions about how their instructional practices changed, I recorded it in the field notes.

Finally, the end of program evaluation and focus group were instruments used to measure the changing instructional practices of participants. Statement four on the end of program evaluation (see Appendix L) says, “My instructional practices changed as a result of this

professional development," and participants completed a Likert scale for this question and were asked to explain their response. During the focus group, participants were asked if their instructional practices changed due to this professional learning experience and were asked to share two specific examples of how their instructional practices changed. Since participation in each of the focus group questions was optional, if participants did not note any instructional changes, they were not required to share during the focus group discussion.

Perceived student impact. It is hypothesized that, as a result of this professional learning, participants will notice a change in their students after implementing some of the concepts and strategies into their instructional practice. It is anticipated that these perceived changes may include increased student engagement, increased belongingness, and stronger relationships between teachers and students.

An entrance ticket was developed (see Appendix P) to allow participants to share how their teaching practices may have impacted the students they work with. The content of the prior session was listed at the top of the entrance ticket, and participants were asked if they implemented something new since the first session. They were then asked to respond to the question, "Did you notice a response from your students? If so, what did you notice?"

Participants were invited to share their entrance tickets with the group if they felt comfortable. During some sessions, if conversation ensued that was not captured through the entrance ticket, this discussion was captured in the reflective field notes.

Perceived student impact was also measured by using of the end of program evaluation and the focus group transcription. Two statements were included on the end of program evaluation, "My students were impacted as a result of my participation in this professional development program" and "My students were positively impacted as a result of my

participation in this professional development program." Participants were asked to rate their responses on a five-point Likert scale and explain their responses to both statements. During the focus group, participants were asked if they believed the professional development affected the relationships participants had with their students and were asked to explain their responses. They were also asked if they noticed any changes in their students specific to student participation, student feelings of inclusion/belonging, or student engagement as a result of implementing practices learned from this professional development.

Effective elements. The last construct measured was effective elements, which I defined as the elements of the program that made this professional development engaging and effective in providing new ideas and concepts to participants. It was anticipated that participants would share that the content was applicable to their teaching context and that ideas were discussed that participants could take straight to the classroom to implement.

This construct was measured through an exit ticket (see Appendix G), reflective field notes, as appropriate, and through open-ended questions in the focus group. The exit ticket asked teachers to rate their level of agreement with the following statements: "I see purpose of the content covered today in relation to my instructional context," "I believe the content today will be useful in my instructional context," and "I believe I will be able to implement what I learned today in my instructional context" using a five-point Likert scale. The Likert scale ranged from a score of one, "Strongly Disagree," to a score of five, "Strongly Agree." At the end, there is a question, "Any other questions, comments, or feedback that you would like to leave?" where participants were able to provide additional comments related to the session. While the three statements on this exit ticket do not directly ask participants to state the effective elements of the

professional development, they helped determine whether participants were likely to incorporate the content from the session in their teaching context.

In the focus group, there was a direct question that asked, "What did you perceive to be the most effective element(s) of this professional development program at changing your attitudes and beliefs?" Responses to this question should directly state what participants believe to be the effective elements.

Data Collection

Data was collected throughout the program and at each of the sessions. A description of the data collection method for each instrument is below. The data collection chart (see Appendix Q) includes an abbreviated version of this narrative.

Attendance tracker. An attendance tracker was created and used at each session (see Appendix R). Participants were given a number as seen on the chart. At the beginning of each session, I wrote the date and start time of the session. I then put a checkmark for each participant present. If a participant was not present, I left the space blank. At the end of each session, I wrote the ending time of the session. If there were any relevant notes (e.g., a participant came late or left early), I recorded that information on the tracker.

Agendas. I had a copy of each session agenda. Either during the session or at the end of the session, I checked off the agenda items covered in the session.

Reflective field notes. I had a journal that I kept for this program. I would start a new journal page for each session and label it with the session topic and date. During the session or immediately following the session, I would write down any information I believed to be relevant from the session. The protocol for collecting reflective field notes, with specific information about the type of collected notes, can be found in Figure 4.

Exit tickets. Exit tickets were given to participants at the end of each session (except for sessions one and ten). Participants were given the Exit ticket and given time to complete it. When I collected the exit tickets from participants, I made sure to collect and order them by their participant number to know who wrote what if they did not include their name. I then entered each exit ticket into a database with a tab for each session, making sure to remove any identifying information (e.g., names or grade level). The exit ticket was entered in the order of the participant numbers. If a participant was absent or did not complete an exit ticket, their space was left blank. Original exit tickets were shredded, and the database remained on a password-protected computer.

Entrance ticket. As participants arrived at each session and got their snack, they were given an entrance ticket (except for session one because there was nothing to reflect on). The session topic (which is the topic from the session before since that is what they are reflecting on) was either written on the entrance ticket or displayed for the participant to see and write independently. Participants were allowed to share and discuss their entrance tickets during our community circle but were not required to share. I then collected the entrance tickets from participants, making sure to collect and order them by their participant number as I did with the exit tickets. I then entered each entrance ticket into a database under the tab for the session it was reflecting on. For example, the entrance ticket given on the day we had the session for defining equity was reflecting on norming and community (the session before), so the data was entered on the norming and community tab. As I did when entering the exit ticket, I removed identifying information, and if a participant was absent or did not complete an entrance ticket, their space was left blank. Original entrance tickets were shredded. The database remained on a password-protected computer.

End of program evaluation. The end of program evaluation was given on the last day of the program. Participants were given a paper copy of the evaluation and about 10-15 minutes to complete it independently wherever they wanted to in the room. Participants were asked to complete the Likert scale for each statement and write down any additional comments in the space provided. Participants could use what they wrote on their end of program evaluations to help guide them in our focus group discussion. End of program evaluations were then collected in the same manner as the entrance and exit tickets and entered onto a new tab in the database. The Likert scale score and the comments were recorded for each statement. Identifying information was removed, and the original evaluations were shredded. This information and the database remained on a password-protected computer.

Focus group. The focus group was also held on the last day of the program. After completing their end of program evaluations, participants were asked to participate in the focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to gain additional qualitative data to inform the research questions using a designed focus group protocol (see Appendix O). The focus group was recorded using my iPhone and sent to rev.com for transcription. The transcription of the focus group did not include any names or other identifying information. It was stored on a password-protected computer, and the original recording was deleted.

Data Analysis

Data was collected using the methods stated above and then were analyzed by research question. A chart with the instruments, frequency, and analysis, broken down by type of data (quantitative and qualitative), can be found in Appendix S.

Qualitative data. Coding was used to find trends, themes, and patterns in the qualitative data. I used a priori coding approach based on the information needed for each research question

(Cohen et al., 2018). For this, I tagged participant responses using the codes AB (showing a change in participant attitudes and/or beliefs), IP (showing a change in participant instructional practices), SI (participant indicating an impact on students or change in student behavior), and EE (when a perceived effective element was mentioned) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Items that had the same codes were grouped together (Cohen et al., 2018; Gibbs, 2007). I then read through again, using an emergent coding approach, and pulled out some of the big ideas (Buckley & Waring, 2009; Cohen et al., 2018). Themes emerged as I noticed repeated ideas within the data relating to a change in teacher perceptions of their attitudes and beliefs, their changes to instructional practice, the impact they believed they had on their students, and perceived effective elements of the professional development. These themes were grouped by the research question they corresponded with.

Quantitative data. Several methods were used to analyze the quantitative data collected for this study.

Attendance log. The attendance log was used to inform the first process evaluation question. First, it was easy to see whether each of the ten sessions took place as planned and whether they took place for the planned period of time (one and a half hours). The number of sessions that took place was divided by the number of planned sessions (ten planned sessions) to determine the percentage of sessions that took place as planned. This was also done with the time of each session. The total time of all ten sessions was added together and divided by 900 minutes (the total time of all the planned sessions) to determine the percentage of time used in the sessions compared to the time planned for the sessions. The attendance log was also used to determine the rate of attendance. To do this, the number of participants in attendance was added

for each of the ten sessions. This number was divided by the number of opportunities for attendance (60 opportunities based on six participants) to determine the attendance rate.

Session agendas. The agendas for each session were used as a checklist to inform whether each of the ten sessions were implemented as planned. None of the agenda items were weighted, but some agenda items were more important to delivering the content than others. For example, the community circle portion of the session was less important if skipped than the actual content portion (activate and engage, explore and discover, organize and integrate activities) of the session. Any deviations from the intended schedule will be discussed in the findings section of the next chapter.

Exit tickets. Quantitative data were collected through exit tickets given at the end of each session (except for session ten because it was a data collection session and there was no content to reflect on). Average scores were calculated from the exit ticket data. A score closer to five for all three statements indicated that the participants believed that the content covered by that session had purpose, was useful in their context, and was easily implemented. An analysis was completed to look at sessions with higher ratings and those with lower ratings to see which session topics might be implemented with more ease or enthusiasm and what changes may need to take place moving forward (for years two and three of the grant). This was triangulated with the qualitative data to help give a bigger picture of the effective elements of each of the professional development sessions.

End of program evaluation. Quantitative data were collected from the end of program evaluation when participants responded to the statements using the five-point Likert Scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The scores for each question were added together and then divided by the total possible score (on a five-point scale with six participants, the possible score

would be 30 for each of the questions). Averages closer to five indicated greater agreement with the statement, whereas ratings closer to one indicated lesser agreement. These average ratings were then sorted by the research question that each statement was designed to inform. For research questions with multiple average ratings (multiple related statements), these ratings were looked at together to determine whether changes or impacts were seen across the statements or whether there was a discrepancy between the average ratings of the related statements.

Conclusion

This intervention aimed to provide teachers with the attitudes, beliefs, and tools they need to best serve all of their students. Through the evaluation of the collected data, I will be able to determine whether this intervention:

1. resulted in changes to teachers' attitudes and beliefs
2. resulted in changes in teachers' instructional practices
3. impacted students (as reported by their teachers)

The results of this study were dependent on the fidelity with which this intervention was implemented and the regular engagement and participation of the teacher participants. If this intervention is successful, it can be scaled up to serve more teachers and students within the building and the district.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

This intervention took place at a public Title I school in a Mid-Atlantic school district during the 2017-2018 school year. This district had an Office on Cultural Proficiency and had just begun developing a new strategic plan in which it was expanding cultural proficiency to include the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Many of the concepts included in this professional development plan are now included in the district's strategic plan. However, due to its restructuring, the district had not yet hired staff to implement professional development inclusive of these concepts at the school level.

The plan for this professional development program was thoroughly described in chapter four. This chapter, chapter five, includes a discussion of the implementation of the professional development program, the findings, and a discussion of future implementation and limitations.

Process of Implementation

Recruitment

As part of the grant focus, we first offered this opportunity to school staff who had been in the district or profession for five years or less. As planned, I only included school staff who directly taught students in the building, as this professional development program addressed classroom-based practices. Twenty-one teachers fit these criteria. None of the teachers that fit these criteria were male and only one teacher who fit the criteria identified as a teacher of color.

They were each sent an invitation via school email to attend an informational session held after school hours. The information session was held in October 2017, and of the 21 teachers at the school with five or fewer years of experience and who provided direct instruction to students, seven attended. I explained the expectations of participants' time, some of the topics for discussion, and the specifics of the grant (including payment) at this session. I mentioned that

this was a research opportunity but choosing not to be part of the research would not exclude them from the program.

After the information session, six staff members self-selected to be part of the group. All these staff members were teachers; four were classroom teachers, and two were interventionists. These teachers worked with students in kindergarten through grade five; five had worked in the district for five or fewer years, and all but one identified as White females. With approval from the school administration, I attempted to fill the four additional funded spots for a total of ten participants in the program, but this effort was unsuccessful.

Preparation

All materials needed for the program were created by the end of October 2017, once participants had been identified and before the program began. The planning documents were kept in a shared Google Drive folder where all grant leaders could access them. For each session, a Google Slides presentation was created. Any media (i.e., videos and external links) were linked into the presentation, and any work documents (i.e., articles, worksheets, and reflection forms) were added to a folder in Google Drive for the corresponding session. Before each session, the documents (i.e., articles, worksheets, and reflection forms) needed for the session were copied. Datasheets (i.e., attendance tracker, entrance tickets, and exit tickets) were copied ahead of time so they would be available for each session. For the final session, a copy of the end of program focus group protocol (for my use), copies of the entrance ticket, and copies of the end of program evaluation were printed. Before this last session, I tested the recording feature on my cell phone and checked that the format required for Rev.com (the company that transcribed the focus group recording) was compatible.

Following each session, I emailed participants a view-only link to the presentation for that session and any reminders (activities they had committed to or information that they needed to bring to the next session). While the original plan was not to share the presentations with participants, they requested the information to share and discuss with their teammates (those not participating in our professional development program).

On the Monday before the next session, I emailed participants as a reminder of our upcoming session and any item(s) that they had committed to do or bring to that session. Participants who could not attend or who would be coming late would typically remind me by responding to this email.

Structure of the Sessions

Per county policy for payment of workshop wages, each session occurred outside of school hours, immediately following the teacher workday. The dates of the sessions were determined through a collaborative effort during our first session. Additional sessions were scheduled to accommodate sessions from our grant planning (not related to the professional development program evaluated in this dissertation) and for inclement weather days that would result in school closing/the need to reschedule a session. On average, two sessions occurred each month, each approximately two weeks apart. However, some months only had one session or had sessions closer together or further apart due to the school system schedule (e.g., Winter Break and Spring Break) and/or times that participants thought that they would be especially busy with teacher tasks (e.g., end of the marking period and parent conferences). The dates of each session can be found in Appendix I.

All sessions took place in my classroom. As participants arrived, they could choose a snack and drink provided through grant funding. Participants received an entrance ticket to work

on and usually chatted amongst themselves until the session began. I initially planned for participants to sit at desks in the classroom facing the projector screen. However, after beginning the first session I felt that the community circle would be more effective if I changed my location in the classroom. With community circles, it is important for all participants, including the facilitator, to be seen as equals (Pranis, 2005) and I felt that there was an imbalance of power during the circle due to my location in the front of the room. Since learning the structure for community circles was something I intended on modeling for participants so they could implement them in their classrooms, after the community circle I explained to the participants how I felt and why, and we collectively agreed to move to a table in the back of the room where we could all sit together. I still projected on the screen; however, since the screen was still in the front of the room, it was difficult for all participants to sit around the table, face each other, and see the screen. One of the participants suggested that I present through my laptop, and all participants agreed that would be better and said they could still see and hear well. All participants (including myself) sat around the back table for all sessions going forward and I displayed the Google Slides and other media directly through my laptop.

The community circle portion of each session was planned to center and focus the group and only last about five minutes. However, for several of the sessions, one or more participants came to the group stressed, excited, or upset about something that had happened during the day. When this happened, our community time was extended approximately ten minutes to give participants time to share their feelings and receive support from the group. Taking this additional time did not impact the session content and the remainder of the session continued as planned. After taking this additional time to debrief about our feelings, participants were always able to re-center around the community circle question, “How are the children?”

Changes to Professional Development Instructional Strategies

Several times throughout the professional development program, I provided more modeling than had been planned. During session one, I created a model of the educational timeline to show participants the structure and the general layout, which was not depicted in the Google Slides.

During session 4, covering disparities in the classroom, participants seemed confused about the directions on the slide when they disaggregated and analyzed their own data. I orally re-explained the directions with different wording, and there still was some confusion among participants. I thus used the behavioral (time-out) data from my classroom and modeled how to complete the chart to disaggregate the data. After modeling, participants understood the directions and independently completed this activity.

During session five, on understanding bias, participants were more reserved and expressed feelings of uncertainty when asked to discuss their feelings about their IAT results, even though I made it clear that they did not have to share their results, just their feelings. In this moment, I decided to model an answer for this discussion and shared my results and feelings with the group. I discussed why I felt like this could be a difficult thing to share. I explained that the results indicated that I may need to do some additional learning and reflection. After modeling my vulnerability, it helped open the discussion a little, but participants were still more reserved than during other sessions and needed additional prompting about why they might be feeling upset or embarrassed by their results.

Participant Input

Several times throughout this professional learning, participants were reminded of related content and introduced it into the learning space. One time was during session nine on inquiry-

based learning. One participant was reminded of "Genius Hour" and shared it with the group. Genius Hour is a concept that allows students to use 20% of their day, or one hour, to work on any project that they are inspired or interested in creating (Juliani, 2016). Our plan did not include discussing Genius Hour, but participants were intrigued with the concept. Instead of having participants complete an actual lesson plan (which was part of the plan), as a group, we discussed the feasibility of implementing Genius Hour, what it might look like, and the supports and scaffolding that might be needed for students to be successful. Since this took approximately 15 minutes, I did not believe that participants would have time to develop a lesson as planned. So instead of creating an actual lesson plan, participants used this concept, or the foundational structure of inquiry-based learning that we discussed in the lesson, to write down ways that inquiry-based learning could be implemented into upcoming units of instruction.

Findings

Process Evaluation Questions

Did the professional development take place as planned? There were ten sessions planned for this intervention, and all ten sessions occurred. Each session was to begin at 3:30 pm and end at 5:00 pm. Since sessions had to begin after the teacher duty day, sessions could not begin before 3:35 pm. For one of the ten sessions, this time was pushed back to 3:40 pm because teachers were still waiting with students due to buses running late. As seen in Table 5, several sessions ended ten to 15 minutes early because the content was covered, participant discussion had ended, and there was no need to keep participants until the planned end time. During session ten, when data was collected, the end of program evaluation and focus group did not take the entire 90 minutes, so the session ended early. Table 5 shows the start and end times and the total time of each session. The actual implementation of the ten sessions took a total of 760 minutes of

the 900 planned minutes (ten sessions at 90 minutes each). Thus, this professional development took 84.4% of the time planned for it to take.

Table 5

Times for Each Session

Session Number	Start Time	End Time	Total Time
1	3:35pm	5:00pm	85 minutes
2	3:35pm	5:00pm	85 minutes
3	3:35pm	5:00pm	85 minutes
4	3:35pm	4:50pm	75 minutes
5	3:35pm	5:00pm	85 minutes
6	3:35pm	5:00pm	85 minutes
7	3:35pm	4:45pm	70 minutes
8	3:40pm	4:45pm	65 minutes
9	3:35pm	4:55pm	80 minutes
10	3:35pm	4:20pm	45 minutes
	Total Time in Program:		760 minutes

Participant attendance also factored into whether the professional development took place as planned. There were six participants and ten sessions; therefore, there were 60 opportunities to attend. Due to some absences, participants attended 54 of the 60 opportunities, with a 90% attendance rate. Some participants were absent more frequently than others due to extenuating home and family circumstances that did not allow them to stay after school on the day of the session(s). Table 6 shows the number of sessions attended by each participant as well as their individual attendance rates. Some participants were up to five minutes late to a session or needed to leave ten minutes early from a session, but these participants were still marked present because they attended most of the session.

Table 6

Rate of Attendance by Participant

Participant	Number of Sessions Attended	Attendance Rate
1	10	100%
2	10	100%
3	10	100%
4	7	70%
5	10	100%
6	7	70%
	Average Attendance Rate:	90%

Was each key session implemented as planned? As stated, all ten sessions took place as planned. Table 7 outlines each session and the agenda items planned for each session. A check indicates that the agenda item was completed, and an x indicates that that agenda item was either not completed or not completed as planned.

Table 7

Agenda Items Completed by Session

Session	Agenda Items
1: Norming and Community	✓ Community Circle ✓ Introductions ✓ Date Coordination ✓ Setting Norms ✓ Education Timeline ✓ How Are the Children?
2: Defining Equity	✓ Community Circle ✓ Explanation of data collection ✓ Entrance Ticket ✓ Accomplished Teaching ✓ Examining Equity ✓ Wrap Up ✓ Exit Ticket

3: Understanding Bias	✓ Community Circle ✓ Entrance Ticket ✓ Defining bias ✓ Harvard's Implicit Association Test (Race) ✓ Reflections and Next Steps ✓ Wrap Up ✓ Exit Ticket
4: Disparities in the Classroom	✓ Community Circle ✓ Entrance Ticket ✓ Disparities ✓ Identifying Disparities in Our Classrooms ✓ Reflections and Next Steps ✓ Wrap Up ✓ Exit Ticket
5: Knowing the Learner	✓ Community Circle ✓ Entrance Ticket ✓ "Cause I Ain't Got a Pencil" ✓ Knowing the Learner ✓ Commitment for Action ✓ Wrap Up ✓ Exit Ticket
6: Teaching the Learner	✓ Community Circle ✓ Entrance Ticket ✓ Who Do We Teach? ✓ Teaching the Learner ✓ Commitment for Action ✓ Wrap Up ✓ Exit Ticket
7: Student Voice	✓ Community Circle ✓ Entrance Ticket ✓ Student Voice Matters ✓ Is Student Voice Enough? ✓ Mapping It Out ✓ Commitment for Action ✓ Wrap Up ✓ Exit Ticket
8: Student Choice	✓ Community Circle ✓ Entrance Ticket

	✓ Choose Your Own Adventure - The Story of Marcus ✓ Student Choice Pre-Thinking ✓ Ways to Empower Students with Choice ✓ Student Choice Additions ✓ Commitment for Action ✓ Wrap Up ✓ Exit Ticket
9: Inquiry-Based Learning	✓ Community Circle ✓ Entrance Ticket ✓ Discuss Data Collection and Ending Celebration ✓ Inquiry-Based Learning ✓ Benefits ✓ Cautions X Commitment for Action ✓ Wrap Up ✓ Exit Ticket
10: Reflection	✓ Explaining Our Food ✓ Community Circle ✓ Entrance Ticket ✓ End of Program Evaluation ✓ Focus Group Discussion

As seen in Table 7, nine of the ten sessions were completed 100% as planned, and, overall, 71 of the 72 planned agenda items (98.6%) were completed as planned. As shared in the process implementation section earlier in this chapter, participants completed a variation of this task by planning for inquiry-based learning in their upcoming instruction but did not complete an actual lesson plan as part of their commitment to action in session nine. This was the only agenda item not completed as planned within the ten sessions.

Outcome Evaluation Questions

How do teacher perceptions of their attitudes and beliefs change as a result of participating in this professional development?

Quantitative findings. The statements on the end of program evaluation were, "I was able to learn something new each session" and "My attitudes and/or beliefs about my students changed as a result of this professional development program." The average rating for the first statement, "I was able to learn something new each session" was 4.5, which indicated that participants agreed or strongly agreed that they learned something new each session. For the second statement, "My attitudes and/or beliefs about my students changed as a result of this professional development program," the average rating was 4.3. This average rating indicated that participants agreed with the statement that their attitudes and beliefs about their students changed as a result of their participation in this professional development.

Qualitative findings. One of the two exit tickets asked participants to share how their attitudes and beliefs had changed. They were asked to share what they used to think and how their new thinking resulted from new learning in this professional development program. Using these exit tickets, each participant gave multiple examples of how they believed their attitudes and beliefs changed due to this session. When this data was combined with the qualitative data collected through the reflective field notes, the end of program evaluation, and the focus group responses, several cross-cutting themes emerged, including awareness and reflection. The responses to this exit ticket, organized by theme, can be found in Table 8.

Table 8

Changes in Attitudes and Beliefs as Recorded on Exit Tickets by Theme

Theme	I used to think…	Now I think…
Awareness	• Equality was the most important way to get every [student] to succeed • Creating equity could only be done through providing accommodations • Intervention provides a necessary scaffold to a struggling reader • Conversations like those had in our meetings wouldn't happen in our school • Bias was only based on color, religion, etc. • That I was slightly biased • I might be slightly biased • I didn't have biases • Disparities were found mostly in race or gender • Disparities were mostly race-based [at our school] • I need to reflect on racial disparities in my reading groups • This was a subject that we didn't openly discuss • Discrepancies were not a big problem	• Equity might very well be more important to success of students • Equity can be created by removing barriers all together • That I need to be aware if my interventions are helping • There are others who would love the opportunity for these conversations • It can be against people, places, beliefs, education levels • That I am moderately biased • I scored moderately biased and was surprised • I, and everyone has some bias but it's all about how you handle it • They can be found in almost any aspect of learning • There are more ways to look at disparities • I need to be proactive to limit racial disparities • We should discuss with the staff • They are reflective of a larger issue and should be considered
Reflection	• Finding out about my students should happen at the beginning • Knowing the learner was based on school and learning style • I knew a lot about my students • We need to teach all curriculum	• We need to take more time to do this during the year • Knowing a student means knowing as much as you can about every part of their life • There might be a way to learn more • Student voice and feelings are as important

	• We should focus on academics most of the time • I always need to stick to my plans • That I knew a lot about my students • I should hear my students • Student voice is just sharing • Community circles were just surface level • Student choice could be used more in the upper grades • Student choice was important in classroom routines • Choice occurs only in certain contexts • Choice was more limited • Student choice would only increase engagement • Student choice was mostly with books • Inquiry was a mixture of guidance and exploration • Inquiry-based teaching was just for writing, math, and science • Inquiry-based learning was only used in older grades • Inquiry was just open-ended	• Focusing on them as people is the most important thing • I need to always take time for social/emotional learning • I have a lot to learn about my students • I need to make their voice visible • It needs to be recognized and amplified • I need to ask deeper questions • It can be used in [primary] grades • It should also be included in instructional time • Choice can occur throughout a student's day • I can implement it in a variety of ways • It will benefit student behavior choices as well • It can be incorporated in so much throughout the day • There are 3 levels - structured, guided, open • Inquiry-based instruction is possible throughout the day • I can use it in my classroom • There are different levels of inquiry

Participants shared new awareness of many of the concepts covered during this professional learning in their exit ticket responses, especially during the sessions in Krownapple's (2016) activate and engage stage (sessions two through four), the first stage of professional learning. For example, one participant previously believed that "equality was the most important way to get every [student] to succeed." After becoming aware of the distinct differences between equality and equity, their belief changed, and they pointed to the importance of equity to ensure student success. Similarly, another participant believed that equity could only occur by providing interventions and accommodations. Our discussions helped her become aware that equity does not always mean providing something but can also occur when removing the barriers that impede a student's success. After discussing the cultural competence continuum stages, several participants shared that they had believed that cultural blindness was a positive thing, believing it meant treating everyone the same and being blind to their differences. They would have rated themselves there on the continuum. However, after learning that cultural blindness was on the negative side of the continuum, they all rated themselves as higher on the continuum.

Similar awareness was described in participant responses on exit tickets and reflective field notes after completing sessions on bias and disparities. For some participants, this awareness came from understanding the different types of biases and understanding that biases are based on things other than race and religion. This awareness grew from within for other participants, and they became aware that they might have had biases of which they were previously unaware. As recorded in the field notes, after the session on bias, one participant said, "Now that we know these things, we can't unknow them and we have a responsibility to keep working." This same awareness grew after participants learned about disparities. Some

participants learned what disparities were and the many facets of education in which disparities might be present. One participant became aware that disparities existed within her classroom, based on her students' data and with things that she has control over (like classroom discipline).

Participants also expressed an awareness that teaching is not just about transmitting the curriculum but also about the individual students and their social and emotional well-being. In the exit tickets from session six, three of the six participants shared that they previously believed they needed to "stick to the plan" and focus on academics and curriculum. However, after discussing how to teach our students, these participants described the importance of a student's social-emotional well-being. One participant said that as a result of this session, she understood that "focusing on [students] as people is the most important thing." A similar change of belief was shared by participants through the end of program evaluation and focus group. On the end of program evaluation, one participant explained her *strongly agree* rating for the statement *My attitudes and/or beliefs about my students changed as a result of this professional development program* by saying, "This [professional development] proved that social/emotional learning is important." During the focus group, another participant took this same sentiment a step further, saying,

> I learned that who we are, we bring to work with us every day even though we may not realize that. We come into this professional setting, and our kids are doing the same thing. They're bringing to us their best selves, and this is allowing us to think about that whole part of the emotional piece of learning.

Participants also expressed changing attitudes and beliefs that resulted from reflecting on their learning. Much of the reflection came during the sessions in the explore and discover and organize and integrate stages of Krownapple's (2016) stages for professional learning (sessions

five through nine) and resulted in changing attitudes and beliefs of the participants. In these sessions, participants were provided more opportunities to learn about practices that could be used with their students. As recorded in the reflective field notes, one participant mentioned that her "big takeaway" from the session on student voice was that "We need to 'hear' students…their opinion matters." Additional examples of reflection were captured in exit ticket responses. Some examples of these reflections include,

- "I used to think finding out about my students should happen at the beginning. Now I think we need to take more time to do this during the year."
- "I used to think community circles were just surface level. Now I think I need to ask deeper questions."
- "I used to think student choice was mostly with books. Now I think it can be incorporated in so much throughout the day."
- "I used to think inquiry-based learning was only used in older grades. Now I think I can use it in my classroom."

Some of these reflections were reiterated in both the end of program evaluation and the focus group discussion. When presented with the statement on the end of program survey, *My attitudes and/or beliefs about my students changed as a result of this professional development program*, three of the six participants noted that this professional development helped them to stop and reflect on their beliefs and practices and whether those beliefs and practices served their student's needs in that moment. This idea was shared again in the focus group when one participant said,

> I feel like it kind of helped me stop and think that it's okay sometimes to just stop and think about what do my kids need right at this moment. And really think about them as

people first and learners second, and that sometimes it's okay to focus on what they need as people and then what they need as students.

Triangulation of findings. The quantitative data collected for this research question indicated that participants believed their attitudes and beliefs changed due to this professional development program. When this information was paired with the qualitative research, a clearer picture emerged as to how the attitudes and beliefs of participants changed. As indicated in the findings above, participants became more aware of their beliefs, built an awareness of terminology related to building cultural competency, and developed an awareness of their role and impact as teachers in the classroom. They also reflected on their attitudes and beliefs and shared more that they can do to build relationships and engage students in the classroom community. This reflection appeared to create an "aha moment" in which participants realized that it was okay to slow down and focus more on teaching their students as individuals rather than just teaching the content.

How do teacher participants believe their instructional practice changed as a result of this professional development?

Quantitative findings. On the end of program evaluation, participants were asked how much they agreed (5, strongly agree) or disagreed (1, strongly disagree) with the statement, *My instructional practices changed as a result of this professional development*. The average rating for this statement was 4.16, which indicated that participants agreed that their instructional practices changed due to this professional learning.

Qualitative findings. Qualitative data related to this research question was collected through an entrance ticket, reflective field notes, the end of program evaluation, and the focus group discussion. When this data was coded, two major themes emerged: changes in

instructional practice related to building community and changes in instructional practice related to teaching content.

The first theme, practices relating to building community, encompassed how teachers changed their interactions with students and provided opportunities to get to know their students better as individuals. During the focus group, participants reported that they implemented community circles, were intentional in listening to student ideas, and provided opportunities for students to share about themselves as individuals. On the end of program evaluation, participants reported that they implemented practices to build a stronger classroom community, which allowed students to take responsibility for classroom jobs and make decisions about the classroom structure (including where they work and with whom they work).

Across the sessions, on the entrance tickets, participants reported changes in practices to build classroom community. Many of these changed practices included implementing community circles, for the first time for one participant, and allowing student input into how students believed things were going in the classroom during these circles. One participant said, “I was more specific with my community circle after our last meeting and wanted to hear their feelings about our classroom.” Another participant took this a step further, and empowered student voice as a result of the community circle. They said, “During my last community circle, I had students share what they liked about our class and what they didn’t like. Students said they wanted a greater role in class jobs, and so we added job responsibilities.” Another participant used community circles after challenging behaviors were reported in related arts and allowed the class to reflect on what had happened and problem-solve about improving their behavior. The participant described, “After a bad day in music we sat down in our circle and talked about what they thought and how they thought we could fix the problem.”

Participants also reported that they implemented strategies to get to know their students better. This included providing opportunities for students to share information ("I gave my students an activity that allowed them to share anything they wanted their teacher to know.") and taking the time to listen to what students had to share. One participant said, "I stopped and listened to every single story and picture and object that was shown to me today." Another participant shared, "I spend more time thinking before I speak to students about certain things and asking more questions to understand why they might be doing what they're doing."

Participants also changed instructional practices related to teaching content. This theme included participant responses about new practices or strategies used to teach the curriculum to students. These changes occurred most after sessions six (teaching the learner) and eight (student choice). As reported in the field notes, after learning information about students during session five (knowing the learner) and discussing how to use that information to teach the learner (session six), participants shared that they provided differentiated opportunities for students to access the content. They allowed students to choose books or topics of interest (reading and writing), let them choose an activity to share their learning (word work activities), and even let them choose their materials and manipulatives to complete their work (science, social studies, and math).

Participants reported similar findings on their entrance tickets. Some of these responses included discussion on how their practices changed based on student needs. One participant shared, "When designing the writing unit I thought a lot about equity and access. I planned a unit using Pebble Go which reads aloud to the students." Another participant reflected on student needs and thought about what each student might need to be supported. They said, "I have been working on being more cognizant of thinking about a child as a whole person when providing

assessment. What can I provide them with based on who they are as a person to be more successful?"

Other entrance ticket responses showed how participants changed their practices and allowed their students more choice in content and how they accessed it. One participant shared, "We started our [new unit] this week with students choosing [what they want to research]. Tomorrow, students will choose an organizer to write facts on." Another participant allowed students to choose their books, based on interest, to add to their book boxes. Two participants allowed their students to choose how they worked and with whom they worked. They said, "I provided choice to my students by giving them options for where they worked, who they worked with and the materials they used" and "I let students choose their own groups for [a grade level activity]. They selected what they were going to make and who they were working with."

Triangulation of findings. The quantitative data showed that participants agreed their instructional practices changed as a result of this professional learning and the qualitative data confirmed this. Teachers reported that they took the time to get to know their students and gave them a voice in the classroom. According to their responses, participants reflected on their attitudes and beliefs, which caused them to change their way of interacting with and responding to students. Instead of all classroom decisions being made by the participants, they shared this responsibility with their students, and the students became problem solvers. Participants also reported a wide variety of instructional practices across content areas, related to how they taught the content and how they allowed students to interact with it (i.e., allowing students to choose what they want to learn about, using media that provided access to all learners, and allowing students to choose the way they displayed their learning).

How do teacher participants perceive their students were impacted as a result of this professional development?

Quantitative findings. On the end of program evaluation, participants rated how much they agreed (5, strongly agree) or disagreed (1, strongly disagree) with two different statements: *My students were impacted as a result of my participation in this professional development program* and *My students were positively impacted as a result of my participation in this professional development program*.

The average rating for the first statement was 4.66, which indicated that overall, participants strongly agreed or agreed that their students were impacted due to their participation in this professional learning. For this statement, four participants rated this statement as a five (strongly agree), and two participants rated this statement as a four (agree).

For the second statement, *My students were positively impacted as a result of my participation in this professional development program*, all participants rated this statement at a 5, strongly agree. Interestingly, there was greater agreement in participant beliefs that their students were impacted positively than beliefs that their students were impacted at all. However, this could indicate that the two participants who rated the first statement a four and the second statement a five saw the impact as positive but not that strong an impact.

Qualitative findings. Entrance tickets, the end of program evaluation, and the focus group discussion provided qualitative data about how participants perceived their students to be impacted by this professional learning. The data were coded, and two themes emerged.

The first theme was connection. All participants commented at some point, whether on the entrance ticket, the end of program evaluation, and/or during the focus group discussion, and reported that they believed students were more connected, either to themselves (the teacher) or

the classroom (the peers) as a result of implementing new strategies in the classroom. Some participants gave specific examples on entrance tickets or during the focus group that indicated what students said or did that made the participant believe the student was more connected. These responses, with participant reporting of specific student actions organized by data collection tool, can be found in Table 9.

Table 9

Participant Feedback About Connection Organized by Data Collection Tool

Data Collection Tool	Feedback About Connection
Entrance Tickets	• Two students from the group have asked to meet with me again in a week to discuss how to solve a friendship problem • They share many feelings and things that are going on at home • I think they felt more heard, a few students even asked if I would do it again
Focus Group	• [Students] kind of were able to advocate for themselves and kind of share their feelings • I just think between my students, I see that they're more respectful and mindful of each other, and they're really empathetic to each other • Some of the language has changed in my classroom. I have a very high energy classroom, but a lot of them have become aware of other people and when they're upset, they'll offer a strategy for how they can help them…they're kind of trying to help each other out so that it's more of a community

The second theme was student engagement. Participants shared that students participated in the classroom community (completing jobs and sharing their thinking), became more independent in completing tasks and activities assigned in class, and got excited about their learning. As one participant shared, and others agreed, "that excitement spreads." As with the theme of connection, all participants noted that they believed their students showed greater engagement due to implementing new practices. These trends were found in participant

responses on entrance tickets, the end of program evaluation, and the focus group discussion. Some of these responses, organized by data collection tool, are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Participant Feedback About Engagement Organized by Data Collection Tool

Data Collection Tool	Feedback About Engagement
Entrance Tickets	• They were more attentive to the speaker and it helped them to think and not call out • They were all very engaged and even enjoyed sharing with each other • Excitement at the choices of books to choose from • I feel like they really bought into it. They did a fabulous job [completing their work] • They enjoyed exploring the manipulatives first and used their classmates' ideas to further their learning
End of Program Evaluation	• They have become more independent and they are more engaged when they have a voice and choice
Focus Group	• I didn't realize how simple involving student choice could have such a big impact, how like more engaged they were, just how happy and excited they were • That's the best-behaved time of the day because…inquiry makes it much more engaging • I feel like my kids are…more independent, and they're more engaged when they feel like they have a voice and a choice • I hear, "I love reading" more often than I used to • We see them telling each other about books

Triangulation of findings. Even though there was a discrepancy between the two quantitative responses, all participants still answered favorably and agreed that they noticed an impact on their students and that that impact was positive. Using the qualitative data, all participants reported changes, either through the entrance ticket, the end of program evaluation, or the focus group discussion, that they noticed in their students, and all changes they noticed were positive. Each participant reported that they believed their students were more connected

and engaged due to implementing new strategies and instructional practices learned through this professional development program.

What did participants perceive to be the most effective elements of the professional development at changing their attitudes, beliefs, and practices?

Quantitative findings. At the end of each session, participants in attendance completed an exit ticket in which they rated their agreement with statements about whether they believed the content covered had purpose, would be useful in their context, and would be able to be implemented in their context. Table 11 displays the average score for each of those statements organized by session. Average scores closer to 5.0 indicated that participants more strongly agreed with the statement, whereas scores closer to 1.0 indicated that participants disagreed more with that statement.

Table 11

Average Exit Ticket Scores by Question and Session

Session	I see purpose of the content covered today in relation to my instructional context	I believe the content today will be useful in my instructional context	I believe I will be able to implement what I learned today in my instructional context
1	-	-	-
2	5.0	4.6	4.4
3	4.8	4.4	4.6
4	5.0	4.8	4.6
5	5.0	5.0	5.0
6	5.0	5.0	5.0
7	4.8	4.8	5.0
8	5.0	5.0	5.0
9	4.8	4.75	4.4
10	-	-	-

Note. There were no participant responses for sessions one and ten because exit tickets were not given.

For the statement about seeing the purpose of the content, all but one participant rated each session as a 5.0, and that one participant still rated that they agreed (4) that they saw the purpose of the sessions for sessions three, seven, and nine. As indicated by these average scores, most participants saw the purpose of the content even if they did not agree as strongly with the statements that the content would be useful or be able to be implemented within their instructional context. The sessions with the overall highest average scores, averaging a 5.0 for all three statements, were sessions five (knowing the learner), six (teaching the learner), and eight (student choice). A shared component of all three of these sessions was that participants developed tools and plans during the professional development session to implement with their students, indicating that this instructional strategy might be an effective element. While these statements did not directly evaluate the effective elements of the professional development program, they helped indicate whether there were effective elements that allowed participants to see value in the content covered and believe they would be able to implement the content into their current teaching practice.

Qualitative findings. Qualitative data was collected through the focus group discussion when participants were asked, *What did you perceive to be the most effective element(s) of this professional development program at changing your attitudes and beliefs?* Three apparent themes emerged in coding this data: building community, content of the professional learning, and resources from the professional learning. The feedback from the focus group discussion is included by theme in Table 12.

As seen in this feedback, participants reflected on the community built from this professional development. Participants commented on the safe space created within the community and appreciated the time and space to have these conversations. Participants also

appreciated being able to share and receive ideas with and from each other and felt that they could “get perspective” from colleagues working in similar positions.

Participants also reflected on the content of the professional development. They shared that the content was both relevant and relatable and was content that did not occur in other professional development they had attended. Participants also commented that they appreciated that there was research included to share why these concepts were important, that they were shown how to implement new practices, and there was time to practice and reflect during each session. As the one participant shared, “…once you have an understanding of something, it’s much easier to implement.”

Table 12

Focus Group Feedback About Effective Elements Organized by the Themes Community, Content, and Resources

Theme	Focus Group Feedback
Community	• I thought it was really valuable to be able to have conversations with so many like-minded people that you wouldn't normally get to have these conversations with…It's really helpful to get perspective from around the building, so I thought it was just really valuable time • Sharing ideas with each other, because sometimes it can be hard to initially start something, but when you play it off each other, I feel like two heads is better than one • Just having this kind of sound board of each other and having different people from different places in the school come together to have kind of the same feelings and the same attitudes toward the school was really neat • I think it's really uplifting to have people in the building you know are feeling the exact same way even if it's all the way across the building, but you can come together and sit down and talk about it and they're ready to listen • I loved the feeling of safeness, the support, and I always look forward to coming • I love that it came from a teacher that's just like the rest of us, and no matter what time we came, or how we came, you always had this calmness about you. You're always like, "okay, how are the children?" So that always just, I think we all at some point came in here feeling stressed, but once you started it, it just all went away. It was like we were the only people on this Earth when we were in this room, you know?
Content	• I thought that it was just so relevant to my life as a teacher…Everything we talked about I could really relate to. It was really helpful. • I think for me it was the most valuable professional development that I've received in my school because I think it really touched us in a place that we don't often go as professionals. • We talked about visible learning, and how there's been research to show that piece is key for student success, but we don't talk about how to do it often [in professional development], so we've done that here • I thought all the topics were really great. There wasn't a lot of overlapping. I didn't feel like we were just talking about the same things every single time. • I think understanding the concepts more. I feel like we kind of delved deeper into more concepts, like student voice. I think once you have an understanding of something, it's much easier to implement • It brought these topics in the forefront of my brain so that I would act on them and I would try something that I might not have typically tried

	• Just how it's all set up so how every time we come in and you ask the question, "How are the children?" We have an opportunity to talk about how our kids are doing, and how we're doing. We don't always get to do that, so I think that piece was really valuable • You built in the time to reflect and try, and I don't think that always happens. I feel like with other PDs it's been really rushed, like you're trying to get a lot into a short amount of time, and I think you really did the let's go slow to move fast. That's what we did here which was really nice
Resources	• I feel like there was a lot of tangible ideas created that we could actually take back and implement right away. It wasn't some overarching idea of, "We should do this," but "Here and try this," and we got to come back and reflect, and I thought that made it way more meaningful in this professional development • I didn't realize how such a simple thing…and I don't have to do anything. You know what I mean? It wasn't any more work for me to have them choose a marker to color with or choose a game. Honestly it kind of made it easier for me. • I think these sessions really gave us great ways to get to know our kids, and like give us permission to take the time because it's really going to come back in their academics anyway

Furthermore, participants made comments about the resources developed and shared during this professional development. Participants commented that they appreciated the ease of implementation and that these ideas did not require a great deal of planning to implement with their students.

Triangulation of findings. When asked whether participants could see the purpose of the content in relation to their instructional context and believed the content would be useful in their instructional context, the overall scores for each of the sessions were a four or higher, which indicated a favorable answer of at least agree. This supported the qualitative data collected through the focus group discussion. Participants shared that conversations like those had during the professional development were not occurring in the building (as part of school-based professional development), but they still felt the content discussed to be relevant and relatable. Participants appreciated being centered each session with "How are the children?" and said they could center the purpose of their learning around their students. They stated that they appreciated learning about the "why" and the theory of concepts, which they said made the strategies easier to implement. Participants also appreciated the time to reflect and expected that time would be provided during each session to do that.

Participants also answered favorably, at least agreeing, that they believed they would implement their learning into their instructional context. During the focus group discussion, participants said they appreciated that resources and ideas were provided to take back to the classroom to implement. Some of these ideas and resources were provided in the professional learning content, and the group developed other resources. Participants were able to see that many of these ideas and resources did not require additional planning but were easy tweaks and additions to their current planning and instruction.

Additionally, throughout their comments, each participant mentioned something about the community built due to this professional learning. Participants felt they had the opportunity to know each other better and develop relationships within the group. They shared that they had the opportunity to talk, reflect, and collaborate. Many participants shared that it helped to have other people who had similar beliefs and experienced similar feelings and challenges within the classroom. As shared by participants, our sessions provided a safe space where we all learned together and discussed topics not always addressed in other professional development opportunities or conversations among teams in the building.

Conclusions

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs changed as a result of this professional learning due to a new awareness of self and in recognizing students' individual and social-emotional needs. Participant attitudes and beliefs also changed after reflecting on the new concepts learned and recognizing that changes to their thinking and practices could work to better support their students.

This professional learning also impacted the instructional practices that teachers used to connect with and build community in their classrooms and teach the instructional content required by the curriculum. These strategies included participants providing student voice and empowerment opportunities, allowing students to choose what they want to learn about, and letting students choose how they want to share their learning. Participants provided equity and access by using various platforms and materials for students to explore and learn from. These changes in instructional practices, as reported by participants, had a direct impact on student connection to the classroom and school community and student engagement. Participants reported that students were more willing to share and take risks and seemed to genuinely care for

and connect to their teacher, classmates, and class community. They also repeatedly shared the excitement and engagement generated by students when implementing these new strategies in the classroom.

There were several elements that participants cited as making this professional development effective. All participants reported the strong community built within this professional development program. Participants felt safe in sharing and appreciated the like-mindedness of others in the group. They felt that the content covered was meaningful and were able to learn the "why" behind the concepts that were covered. Participants did not feel that the content was rushed and did not feel like they were talking about the same concepts repeatedly. Members of this professional development program were active participants and were expected to implement the strategies discussed and developed during each session. They were provided with ideas and resources and worked together to develop additional ideas and resources that they easily implemented in their classrooms without additional planning or work. Participants saw the impact their learning and implementation had on students, which motivated them to continue learning and implementing these practices.

Research from across the country and the findings of the needs assessment study discussed in chapter two pointed to disparities in student engagement, feelings of belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support among students of color. This professional learning aimed to equip teachers with knowledge and strategies to engage students, develop feelings of belongingness, and connect with their students, so students felt supported. Based on the findings in this study, participants perceived this professional learning to result in students being more engaged in their learning due to implementing new strategies within instruction. When participants implemented new strategies and got to know their students, participants created

strong classroom communities where they believed students felt they belonged and were active participants in making decisions about the classroom. Moreover, participants perceived that their students saw that their teachers cared about them, took an interest in them, and implemented the things that the students voiced. While this professional learning is not the answer to rectifying all disparities in student engagement, feelings of belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support, it appears that teachers perceived it to be an intervention that could generate engagement, feelings of belongingness, and perceptions of teacher support among students.

Discussion

The following discussion includes the connections to extant literature, recommendations for replicating this professional development, and recommendations for future research. It also includes the known limitations of this study and the limitations of the findings.

Relation to Extant Literature

The findings of this study are in line with the findings of related studies. García and Guerra (2004) completed a study in which participants completed professional development around topics related to diversity and equity. This study found that when professional development linked the concepts taught to teaching practices that could be implemented, teachers were more likely to implement the strategies learned during professional development with their students. Yoon and colleagues (2007) also found that when professional development was focused simultaneously on content and practice, it positively impacted teacher learning and implementation of new practices into their instruction.

García and Guerra (2004) also found that when teachers discussed and reflected on new ideas and concepts, they were more apt to report a change in their attitudes and beliefs than when this discussion did not occur. However, this study did not measure student outcomes due to these

teachers' cultural competence development. However, as discussed in chapter one, when teachers implement culturally responsive strategies in the classroom, like including students' interests and treating students as valued members of the class, it increases student engagement and feelings of belongingness (Banks, 2015; Hardiman, 2012). Additionally, numerous studies link the presence of strong student-teacher relationships with higher academic achievement, greater engagement and effort, and greater feelings of value and belongingness within the school and classroom (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014; Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009; Spilt, et al., 2012).

Recommendations

Changes to the professional development. Several recommendations could make this professional development program stronger and applicable for teachers outside of elementary school if this program was replicated. During the end of program evaluation and focus group discussion, participants were asked what they would change or improve if we held this professional development program again. One participant shared that they believed it would be helpful if participants had time during the school day to observe other teachers in the program to see what strategies they are implementing and what strategies they could take back to their own classroom. According to Finn, Chiappa, Puig, and Hunt (2011), since most "educators teach in isolation, their teaching techniques are based on prior experiences from the finite number of teachers they were exposed to as learners" (p. 154). Therefore, teachers do not always have the opportunity to observe practices that are different from their own and benefit from peer observation. When teachers can observe their peers, they can learn new strategies and borrow strategies that they saw modeled during their observation (Finn et al., 2011). Several other participants shared that they wished there was some sort of "homework" between sessions. They

said that if everyone created resources between sessions they could be shared at the next session, and we could create a bank of resources that all participants could access and share with their teams.

Reflective field notes included suggestions for changes to the professional development program for future groups. One suggestion appropriate for any group was that the directions for the timeline activity and the disparity activity include a model so that participants can see what they need to complete.

If implemented with middle and high school teachers, some activities, like those in the early sessions that required drawing and coloring, might need to be adjusted for teachers working with older students. Additionally, amplifying student voice, including student choice, and implementing inquiry-based learning will look different for older students. For example, students in secondary grades are coming into adulthood and are expressing themselves and participating in activism in more direct ways (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). This expression and activism could include volunteerism, planning and/or participating in protests, and organizing around important ideas. These ideas could and should be explored with secondary teachers as they are part of the lived experiences of their students. Also, students in secondary education may not require as much scaffolding and support when presented with inquiry-based tasks as it is a strategy more common in their traditional practice (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

Furthermore, it would be beneficial to explain the theory behind this professional learning plan and the reasoning for the order of the presented content (using an inside out approach) at the beginning of this professional development program (maybe during the information session) so participants can understand the importance of this work, some of the working theories that support it, and the overall benefits of culturally responsive teaching. Just

like students, when teachers can see the purpose and value of professional learning, their engagement and buy-in increase (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021).

Implementation of the professional development program. This professional development program took place outside of the school day, which limited the number of participants who could attend. However, each of the participants said multiple times how important and transformative the work was that they completed in the program, and they all believed it had a positive impact on them and their students. Most professional development provided by schools is short in duration, a "one and done" approach, and is not effective (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). This professional learning, or professional learning with similar content, should be built into the teacher workday throughout the school year and implemented in more schools over a sustained period (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021).

Additional research. The data discussing student impact was not information gathered from students but, instead, gleaned from teachers' perceptions about the impact this work had on their students. While some teachers believe they know their students well, the teachers in this study may have been incorrect in their perceptions of their students. It would be beneficial for future researchers to include actual data from students to gain more accurate data around student impact. It would also be interesting to compare the student responses to the teacher perceptions to see if and how they align.

It would be beneficial to either replicate this study using data instruments used and validated in other studies or conduct additional research on the instruments used in this study to determine their reliability and validity. If replicated, it would be interesting to see how future participants responded to the series of statements about student impact on the end of program evaluation where participants responded if they saw an impact on their students and if they

believed it was a positive impact. Additionally, the constructs of cultural competence and bias could be further analyzed using instruments like Liang and Zhang's self-assessment to explore cultural competence (2009), validated through a study by Bustamante, Skidmore, Nelson & Jones (2016).

And it would be beneficial to further study to determine if the changes to teachers' attitudes and beliefs and teaching practices, as noted in the findings, were implemented long term or if they were just implemented for the duration of this professional development program. According to Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, Terrell, and Lindsey (2019), when this professional development is implemented effectively within schools, there should be lasting changes to the practices and beliefs of the participants. This sentiment was shared by one of the participants in this dissertation study when they said, "Now that we know these things, we can't unknow them and have a responsibility to keep working."

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. First, since teachers self-selected to participate, there was no opportunity to produce a randomized or representative sample. Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2002) found that participants who self-select may be overachievers or already have experience in the professional development content, thus influencing the results. I recognize this as a threat to validity. However, due to restrictions of the district and administration, and the fact that the professional development was being held after school hours, this remains a limitation of the study.

A second limitation is the small sample size used in this study. Due to such a small sample size, these findings cannot be generalized to the context of this particular school, much less the context of a larger district. There were only six participants, all of whom came from the

same school, which threatened generalizability. However, due to time restrictions and the funding limitations of the grant, only a small sample size was able to be used for this study, and all participants were from the same school.

A third limitation of the study is that participants self-reported data regarding changed practices and how the implementation of new practices impacted their students. Due to my role in the school (teaching during the day, and with time working on the grant needing to occur after school hours), I was unable to observe teachers in their classrooms to monitor whether they were implementing the practices we learned during the professional development and had to rely on participants self-reporting this data. Our district is also very protective of student data and privacy and does not allow outside research requiring student input. Therefore, using teacher perceptions and self-reporting of data had to be used instead of observational and student survey data.

Final Summary

Since the completion of this study, the landscape of education and professional development for teachers has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers and students had to adapt to a new way of learning, making the use of instructional technology and implementation of concurrent teaching models the focus of recent professional development (Hartshorne, Baumgartner, Kaplan-Rakowski, Mouza, & Ferdig, 2020).

However, the need for culturally responsive teaching and understanding did not disappear. This pandemic illuminated the inequalities in access to technology for students of color and students living in lower socio-economic brackets (Hartshorne et al., 2020). During this time, the country watched as a video circulated through social media and news outlets of a Black man being murdered by a White police officer. National protests took place, and the Black Lives

Matter movement strengthened (Bunch, 2020). Conversations about race, justice, bias, and (in)equality permeated aspects of everyday life, and, according to Bunch (2020), this work is more important now than ever. I hope that this work will be adapted over time to meet the changing needs of teachers and students in this socio-political culture so that all students can feel they belong, can be engaged, and can feel supported by their teachers when they attend school.

Appendices

Appendix A

Research Questions, Methods, and Measures

Research Question	Methods	Measures
1. Are there disparities in…		
(a) Engagement	• RAPS Assessment • Collection of Report Cards • Classroom Observations • Focus Group	• Responses to the engagement statements • Letter and effort grades • Student participation • On/Off Task Data • Focus Group Responses
(b) Belongingness	• RAPS Assessment • Collection of Discipline Data • Classroom Observations • Focus Group	• Responses to the belongingness statements • Tracking teacher interactions • Focus Group Responses
(c) Student perceptions of teacher support	• RAPS Assessment • Collection of Discipline Data • Collection of Report Cards • Classroom Observations • Focus Group	• Responses to the perceived teacher support statements (see Appendix B) • Letter and effort grades • Tracking teacher interactions • Focus Group Responses (see Appendix A)

Appendix B

Modified RAPS Questionnaire

VARIABLE	STATEMENT
Engagement	• I work very hard on my schoolwork. • I don't try very hard in school. • I pay attention in class. • I don't work very hard in school. • When I'm in class I just act as if I'm working. • How important is it to you to do the best you can in school?
Belongingness	• When I'm with my teacher, I feel ignored. • I wish I were someone else. • When I'm with my teacher, I feel mad. • When I think about myself, I feel bad. • When I'm with my classmates, I feel ignored. • I wish I felt better about myself. • When I'm with my teacher, I feel unhappy. • When I'm with my classmates, I feel mad. • I wish I liked myself better. • When I'm with my classmates, I feel good. • When I think about myself, I feel unhappy. • When I think about myself, I feel proud. • When I'm with my classmates, I feel unhappy. • When I'm with my teacher, I feel good.
Perceived Teacher Support	• My teacher is fair with me. • My teacher's expectations for me are way off base. • My teacher doesn't explain why we have to learn certain things in school. • My teacher doesn't seem to have enough time for me. • My teacher cares about how I do in school. • My teacher doesn't talk about how schoolwork is related to what I want to be. • My teacher isn't fair with me.

	• My teacher interrupts me when I have something to say. • My teacher likes the other kids in my class better than me. • My teacher doesn't make clear what he/she expects of me in school. • I can't work very hard in school.

Appendix C

Report Card Grading Codes

Core Content: Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Health

Related Arts: Physical Education, Music, Art, and Library Media

Grades - Evaluation Codes

Indicates level of progress in areas. Grades are based on multiple measures including, but not limited to teacher observation, formal and informal assessments, classwork, and projects.

A: Outstanding Level (90-100%)
B: High Level (80-89%)
C: Satisfactory Level (70-79%)
D: Low Level (60-69%)
E: Failure (< 60%)

Effort Codes

Describes the student's level of task completion, class participation, quality of work, and timely submission of class and homework assignments.

1: Outstanding, consistently demonstrates
2: Satisfactory, demonstrates most of the time
3: Needs Improvement, inconsistently demonstrates

Appendix D

Questionnaire Protocol

Approximate time to complete with each class: *20 minutes*

Directions for administering the questionnaire:

1. *Author is introduced to the class by the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher then leaves the room and takes students who did not return consent forms.*
2. *Author explains, "I am going to give you a survey about some of your thoughts and beliefs about school. There is no right or wrong answer and you can answer each question how you best believe it should be answered. This survey is confidential, meaning that you will not put your name on it and nobody will know how you answered. Does anyone have any questions?"* The *author will take time to answer any student questions.*
3. *Author will pass out the assessment to each student and point out the scale being used. The author will explain, "I am going to read each statement aloud two times and then give you time to answer. If you have any questions, or need a statement read again, please raise your hand."*
4. *For each question the author will read the statement two times. The author will then allow 30 seconds for students to respond.*
5. *Following the last question, the author will collect student surveys and thank students for their participation.*

Appendix E

Focus Group Protocol

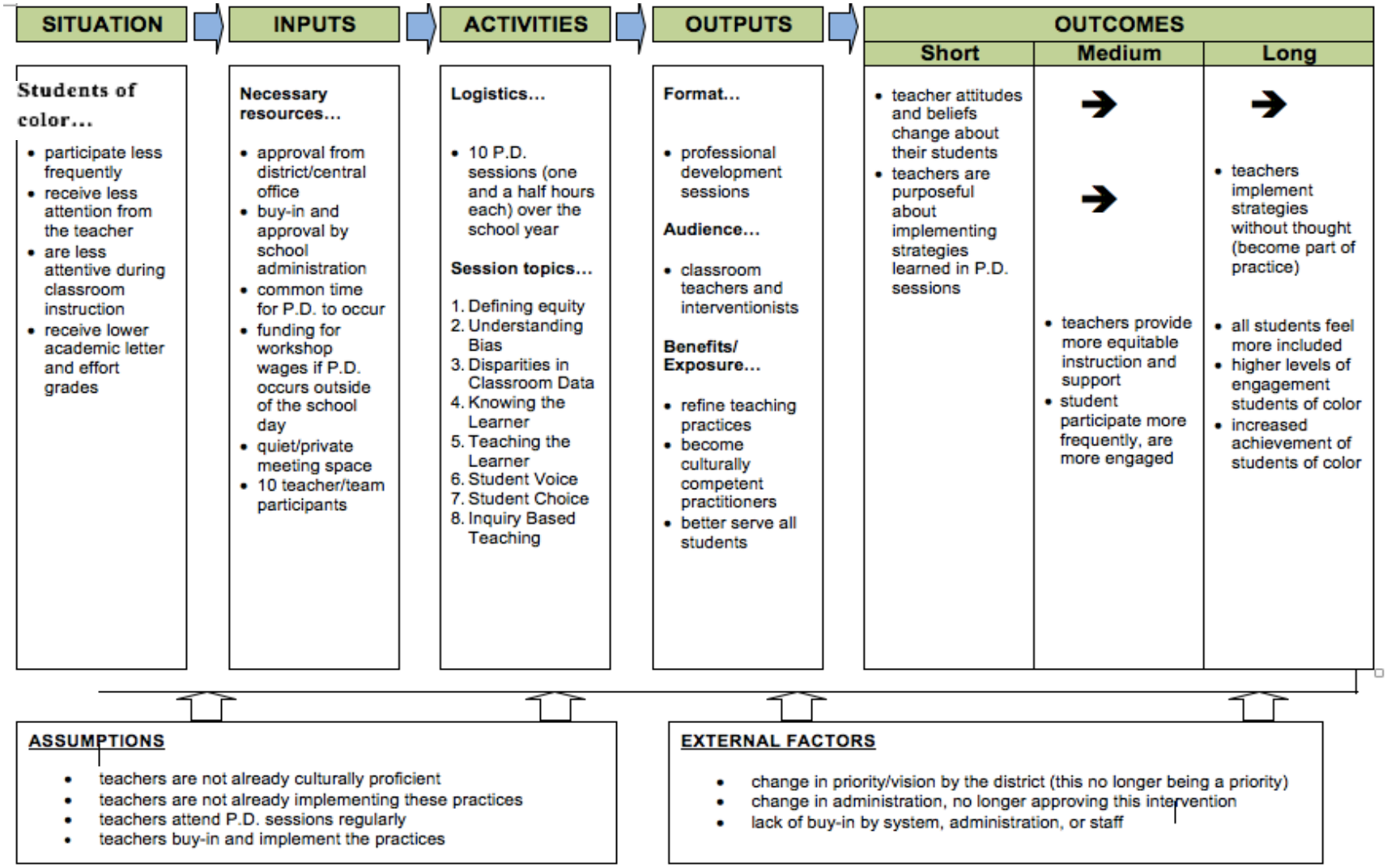
Approximate time to complete each group: *25 minutes*

Directions for leading the focus group:

1. *Thank students for having their lunch with me. Explain that this work is confidential and that I won't be sharing anything that say with their teachers or parents…but that this is part of research.*
2. *Prior to recording, gain oral consent from each student (written consent has already been given).*
3. *Work through the following set of questions. Respond and question as organically as possible to keep the conversation going.*
    a. *What do you like about school?*
    b. *What do you like about your teachers?*
    c. *What do you like about your classmates?*
    d. *If you could change anything about school, what would you change?*
4. *When time is up, ask students if there is anything else they would like to share.*
5. *Summarize for students what they had shared and ask if they would like to change or explain anything that has been summarized from the conversation.*
6. *Thank students for their time. End the recording.*

Appendix F

Logic Model



Appendix G

Exit Ticket/Survey

Name (optional): _____ Date: _____

Exit Ticket

Directions: Please complete the survey by completing the scale for how much you agree with each statement. Please provide any questions or feedback from the session.

1. I see purpose of the content covered today in relation to my instructional context.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

2. I believe the content today will be useful in my instructional context.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

3. I believe I will be able to implement what I learned today in my instructional context.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

4. Any other questions, comments, or feedback that you would like to leave.

Appendix H

I Used to Think…Now I Think
Reflection Exercise

I used to think…	Now I think…
Because…	

Appendix I

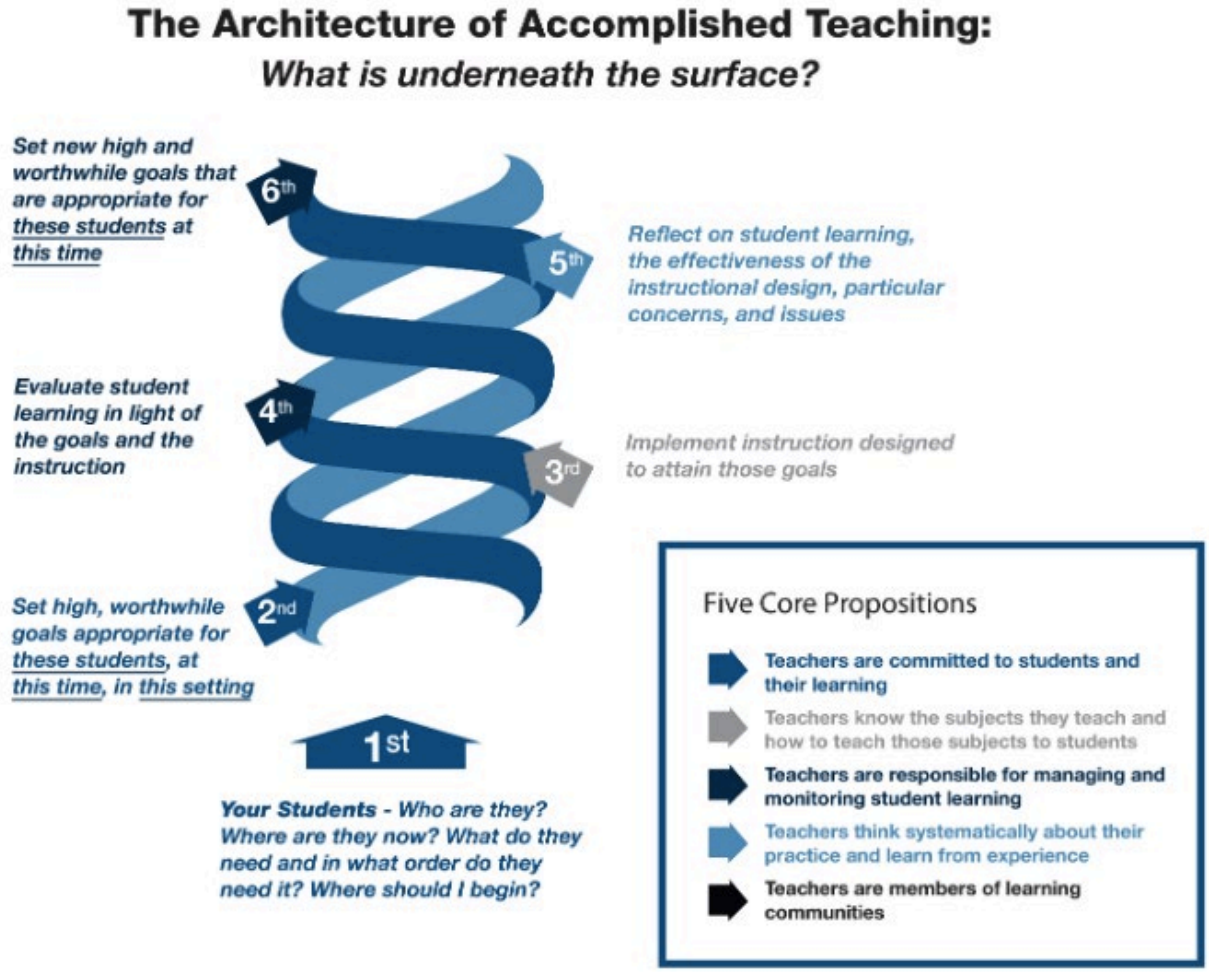
Professional Development Sessions Layout

	Session	Topic	Date	Activate & Engage	Explore & Discover	Organize & Integrate
Activate and Engage	1	Norming and Community	Nov. 8	Community Circle Introduction and Setting Norms	Group completion and discussion of the education timeline	"How are the Children?" video and discussion
	2	Defining Equity	Nov. 29	Images of equity and equality - Compare and Contrast Discussion	Group completion of Equity and Equality Chart (aspects of education)	What does this look like in our school? Classroom? If it needs to change, how do we change it? (Discussion)
	3	Understanding Bias	Dec. 13	Complete Harvard's Implicit Association Test individually	Group Discussion: What did you expect your results to be? What is your reaction to these results? Challenging our assumptions work	Committing to Change - What are you going to do from here? discussion
Explore and Discover	4	Disparities in the Classroom	Jan. 10	Introduction to commonalities in the classroom	Independent work: teachers rating student groups in their classrooms	Discussion: What can we change to combat these disparities?
	5	Knowing the Learner	Jan. 24	"Cause I Ain't Got a Pencil" poem and discussion	Discussion for how we can know our students…in teams, search for resources	Share out resources…choose on to complete with students prior to the next session
	6	Teaching the Learner	Feb. 15	Stand up if… (activity)	What surprised you? Based on this data, who are you serving well? Not well?	What can you do to change this? How will you teach your students differently now

						that you have this information?
Organize and Integrate	7	Student Voice	Feb. 28	Watch "Student Voice Matters!" video. What is our response to this?	Presentation about why student voice matters. Providing a platform, recognizing, and amplifying student voice.	Participants complete a Student Voice mind map…How are you going to provide a platform for student voice?
	8	Student Choice	Mar. 14	The story of Marcus arriving at school…choose your own adventure.	Watch "10 Ways to Empower Students with Choice" video Individuals circulate around the room and write examples for each of these 10 ways. Discuss them as a group.	Complete week's calendar for student choice options.
	9	Inquiry Based Learning	May 9	Define inquiry-based learning by watching a video. (What is it and what does it require?)	Teachers independently review upcoming standards…how can I integrate inquiry based learning into one lesson?	Participants share their lessons and commit to implement.
	10	Reflections	May 23	Pot Luck and explanation of food item(s)	End of Program Evaluation	Focus Group Discussion

Appendix J

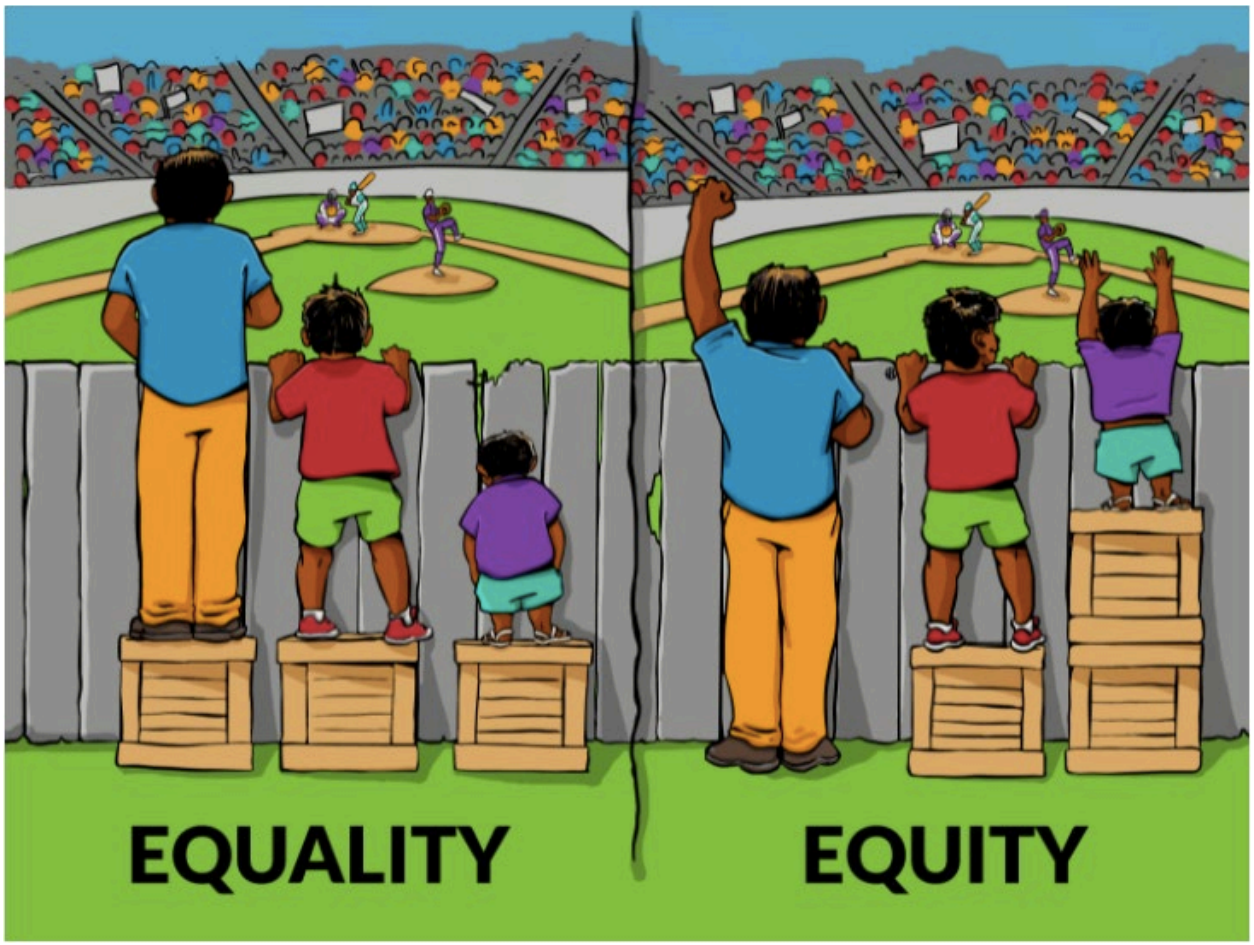
NBPTS: Architecture of Accomplished Teaching



National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2017). The architecture of accomplished teaching [Online Image]. Retrieved from http://www.nbpts.org/wp-content/uploads/MC-GEN.pdf

Appendix K

Equality vs Equity Drawing



Interaction Institute for Social Change (2016). Illustrating equality vs equity [Online Image]. Retrieved from https://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equi

Appendix L

End of Program Evaluation

Name (optional): _____ Date: _____

Program Evaluation

Directions: Please complete the survey by completing the scale for how much you agree with each statement. Please comment below each question with follow-up from the question.

1. I believe this professional development program was a valuable experience.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Please explain your response:

2. I was able to learn something new each session.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Please explain your response:

3. My attitudes and/or beliefs about my students changed as a result of this professional development program.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Please explain your response:

4. My instructional practices changed as a result of this professional development program.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Please explain your response:

5. My students were impacted as a result of my participation in this professional development program.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Please explain your response:

6. My students were ***positively*** impacted as a result of my participation in this professional development program.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Please explain your response:

7. What was your favorite thing about participating in this program? Why?

8. If you could change/improve one thing, what would it be and why?

9. If there is anything else you would like to share, please share it below.

Appendix M

Process Evaluation Data Collection Matrix

Fidelity Indicator / Process Evaluation Question	**Data Source(s)**	**Data Collection Tools**	**Frequency** (November 2017 through May 2018)
Did the professional development take place as planned?	Professional Development Sessions Teacher Participants	Calendar and Clock to Keep Time Sign in Sheets	Ten sessions over a period of seven months for a period of 1.5 hours each At the beginning of each of the 10 PD sessions
Was each key session implemented as planned?	Professional Development Sessions	Lesson Plans Agenda Checklists	At the end of each of the 10 PD sessions

Appendix N

Outcome Evaluation Data Collection Matrix

Outcome Evaluation Question	**Data Source(s)**	**Data Collection Tools**	**Frequency** (November 2017 through May 2018)
How do teacher perceptions of their attitudes and beliefs change as a result of participating in this professional development?	Teacher Participants	"Before I Thought…Now I know…" exit tickets Group discussions in PD sessions End of Program Evaluation	P.D. Activity Each Session Each session (as appropriate) One time (May/last session)
How do teachers' instructional practices change as a result of this professional development?	Teacher Participants	Entrance Tickets Group discussions in PD sessions End of Program Evaluation	Beginning of each session Each session (as appropriate) One time (May/last session)
How do teacher participants perceive their students were impacted as a result of this professional development?	Teacher Participants	Entrance Tickets Group discussions in PD sessions End of Program Evaluation	Beginning of each session Each session (as appropriate) One time (May/last session)
What did participants perceive to be the most effective elements of the professional development at changing their attitudes, beliefs, and practices?	Teacher Participants	Exit Tickets Focus Group Discussion	Each session One time (May/last session)

Appendix O

End of Program Focus Group Protocol

Approximate time to complete group: *45 minutes*

Directions for leading the focus group:

1. Thank participants for all of their work throughout this program, and for their commitment in being here for this last session.

2. Prior to recording, gain oral consent from each participant. Remind them that data will be used to strengthen the program, to inform the grant, and for additional data analysis for my dissertation work.

3. Work through the following set of questions. Respond and question as organically as possible to keep the conversation going.

1. Did you believe this professional development program to be a valuable experience?
    a. Why or why not?
    b. What specifically did you believe was valuable?

2. Were you able to learn something new each session?
    a. What were some specific things that you learned?

3. Do you believe your attitudes and beliefs changed about your students as a result of this professional development program?
    a. Why or why not?
    b. What did you perceive to be the most effective element(s) of this professional development program at changing your attitudes and beliefs?
    c. How would you rate your cultural competency compared to where you started at the beginning of this professional development?

4. Did your instructional practices change as a result of this professional development program?
    a. Can you give two examples of these changes and their impact on your students?

5. Do you feel that this professional development program had an impact on the relationships you had with students?
    a. How so?

6/7. Do you believe that your students were impacted, or positively impacted, as a result of your participation in this professional development program?
    a. Did you notice any changes specific to student participation?
    b. Did you notice any changes specific to feelings of inclusion/belonging?
    c. Did you notice any changes specific to engagement?

8. What was your favorite thing about participating in this program? Why?

9. If you could change or improve on thing, what would it be and why?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share about this program?

4. Summarize for participant what they had shared and ask if they would like to change or explain anything that has been summarized from the conversation.

5. Thank students for their time. End the recording.

Appendix P

Entrance Ticket

Last session we discussed _____

1. How did you implement this within your teaching context?

2. Did you notice a response from your students? If so, what did you notice?

Appendix Q
Data Collection Chart

Session	Process Evaluation	Outcome Evaluation
1	• Attendance Sheet (PQ#1) • Calendar / Beginning and End Times (PQ#1) • Insider's Agenda/Lesson Plan (PQ#2)	• Discussion Notes (OQ#1,2,3,4)
2	• Attendance Sheet (PQ#1) • Calendar / Beginning and End Times (PQ#1) • Insider's Agenda/Lesson Plan (PQ#2)	• Discussion Notes (OQ#1,2,3,4) • Exit Ticket (OQ#1) • Exit Ticket (OQ#4)
3	• Attendance Sheet (PQ#1) • Calendar / Beginning and End Times (PQ#1) • Insider's Agenda/Lesson Plan (PQ#2)	• Entrance Ticket (OQ#2,3) • Discussion Notes (OQ#1,2,3,4) • Exit Ticket (OQ#1) • Exit Ticket (OQ#4)
4	• Attendance Sheet (PQ#1) • Calendar / Beginning and End Times (PQ#1) • Insider's Agenda/Lesson Plan (PQ#2)	• Entrance Ticket (OQ#2,3) • Discussion Notes (OQ#1,2,3,4) • Exit Ticket (OQ#1) • Exit Ticket (OQ#4)
5	• Attendance Sheet (PQ#1) • Calendar / Beginning and End Times (PQ#1) • Insider's Agenda/Lesson Plan (PQ#2)	• Entrance Ticket (OQ#2,3) • Discussion Notes (OQ#1,2,3,4) • Exit Ticket (OQ#1) • Exit Ticket (OQ#4)
6	• Attendance Sheet (PQ#1) • Calendar / Beginning and End Times (PQ#1) • Insider's Agenda/Lesson Plan (PQ#2)	• Entrance Ticket (OQ#2,3) • Discussion Notes (OQ#1,2,3,4) • Exit Ticket (OQ#1) • Exit Ticket (OQ#4)
7	• Attendance Sheet (PQ#1) • Calendar / Beginning and End Times (PQ#1) • Insider's Agenda/Lesson Plan (PQ#2)	• Entrance Ticket (OQ#2,3) • Discussion Notes (OQ#1,2,3,4) • Exit Ticket (OQ#1) • Exit Ticket (OQ#4)
8	• Attendance Sheet (PQ#1) • Calendar / Beginning and End Times (PQ#1) • Insider's Agenda/Lesson Plan (PQ#2)	• Entrance Ticket (OQ#2,3) • Discussion Notes (OQ#1,2,3,4) • Exit Ticket (OQ#1) • Exit Ticket (OQ#4)
9	• Attendance Sheet (PQ#1)	• Entrance Ticket (OQ#2,3)

	• Calendar / Beginning and End Times (PQ#1) • Insider's Agenda/Lesson Plan (PQ#2)	• Discussion Notes (OQ#1,2,3,4) • Exit Ticket (OQ#1) • Exit Ticket (OQ#4)
10	• Attendance Sheet (PQ#1) • Calendar / Beginning and End Times (PQ#1) • Insider's Agenda/Lesson Plan (PQ#2)	• Entrance Ticket (OQ#2,3) • Discussion Notes (OQ#1,2,3,4) • End of program evaluation (OQ#1,2,3) • Focus Group Transcript (OQ#1,2,3,4)

Appendix R
Attendance Log

Participant	Session1	Session2	Session3	Session4	Session5	Session6	Session7	Session8	Session9	Session10
	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
	Start:	Start:	Start:	Start:	Start:	Start:	Start:	Start:	Start:	Start:
	End:	End:	End:	End:	End:	End:	End:	End:	End:	End:
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										

Appendix S

Quantitative and Qualitative Data

	Instrument	Frequency	Analysis
Quantitative	Attendance Sheets	1 per session 10 total	Rate of attendance
	Exit Tickets (Process)	6 per session (excluding sessions 1 and 10) 48 total	Average score for each scaled question
	End of Program Evaluation	1 session 6 total	Average score for each scaled question
Qualitative	Entrance Tickets	6 per session excluding the sessions 1 and 2 48 total	Coding: • Reported changes to instructional practices (IP) • Perceived student impact / observed change in student behavior (SI)
	Anecdotal Notes	1 per session 10 total	Coding: • Reported changes to attitudes and beliefs (AB) • Reported changes to instructional practices (IP) • Perceived student impact / observed change in student behavior (SI) • Perceived effective elements of the professional development (EE)
	Exit Tickets (Outcome)	6 per session (excluding sessions 1 and 10) 48 total	Coding: • Reported changes to attitudes and beliefs (AB) • Perceived effective elements of the professional development (EE)
	End of Program Evaluation	1 session 6 total	Coding: • Reported changes to attitudes and beliefs (AB) • Reported changes to instructional practices (IP) • Perceived student impact / observed change in student behavior (SI) • Perceived effective elements of the professional development (EE)
	Focus Group Transcript	1 session 1 total	Coding: • Reported changes to attitudes and beliefs (AB)

			• Reported changes to instructional practices (IP) • Perceived student impact / observed change in student behavior (SI) • Perceived effective elements of the professional development (EE)

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